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taste of home

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Chicken & Broccoli Alfredo

Prep: 10 min. Cook: 20 min. Makes: 4 servings

- ½ of a 1-lb. pkg. linguine
- 1 cup fresh **or** frozen broccoli florets
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1¼ lb. skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into 1½" pieces
- 1 can (10¾ oz.) *Campbell's*® Condensed Cream of Mushroom Soup (Regular, 98% Fat Free **or** Healthy Request®)
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

1. Prepare linguine according to package directions in 3-qt. saucepan. Add broccoli during last 4 min. of cooking time. Drain linguine mixture.
2. Heat butter in skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook until well browned and cooked through, stirring often.
3. Stir soup, milk, cheese, black pepper and linguine mixture in skillet and cook until mixture is hot, stirring occasionally. Serve with additional Parmesean cheese.

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COOKING, CARING & SHARING® | DECEMBER/JANUARY 2012

ON OUR COVER Make merry with clever packaging ideas for the ultimate giftable treats, *page 59*.

Photographer: **Lori Foy**
Set Stylists: **Stephanie Marchese & Pam Stasney**
Food Stylists: **Shannon Roum & Leah Rekau**

Joyful Delights

You've decked the halls, now load the table with cheer and pass it on to family and friends with celebratory dishes and spot-on gifts. Carry the fun into the New Year with food, tips and tactics to make 2012 your best year yet!

SPECIAL THIS ISSUE

20 **Christmas** Celebrate holiday classics with an updated menu that's inspired by tradition.

59 **Contest! Gifts from the Kitchen** Lovingly prepared, beautifully packaged and eagerly devoured, these winning recipes will have recipients swooning.

69 **Resolve to Live Amazingly** All those things you've been wanting to do? Have a blast accomplishing every one of them.

114 **Across the Table: Cristina Ferrare** Oprah's culinary guru on gadgets, eating from the carton and the makings of a killer meal.

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28 **Appetizers & Snacks** You may be celebrating in your home time zone, but this party fare lets you and your guests jet-set around the world.

34 **Potluck** Usher in morning cheer with a holiday brunch that combines make-ahead ease with festive flavors and a touch of elegance.

36 **Celebration** Potato pancakes, also known as latkes, lend themselves to variations and eating by the dozen.

COOK SMART

43 **Tools & Techniques** Turn your kitchen into a confectionery with easier-than-you-think homemade candy. Our test kitchen shows you how.

45 **Spice Rack** Anise offers a hint of licorice flavor to a variety of foods. You'll absolutely love it baked into chocolate-dipped biscotti.

47 **Quick Fix** Clink! Festive occasions abound this time of year. Have a celebratory drink ready for any occasion or age group.

50 **Weeknight Solutions** Blustery weather got you down? Warm up the family in 45 minutes or less with cozy, no-fuss fare.

53 **Cooking School** Serve classic comfort in a more slender version with chicken potpies that have been lightened up.

54 **Healthy Choices** Desserts appear in droves during the holidays. These deliver decadence while treating your waistline kindly.

56 **Health Briefs** News and notes on diet-friendly pistachios, the benefits of blueberries, and how hot toddies can cure the common cold.

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WANT MORE? From recipes to how-to's and hints, our website offers even more of what you love about the magazine.

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- **NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS** Get svelte with our healthy recipes

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- **COOKIE COUNTDOWN** Our 12 favorite Christmas cookies sent right to your inbox
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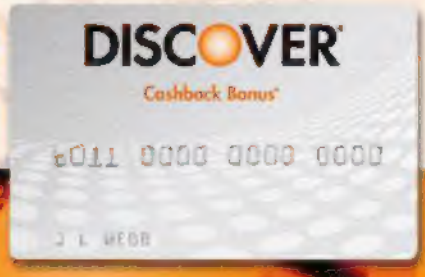

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CLOSE TO HOME

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98 **Cooks Who Care** The biggest gifts are in the giving. Here are eight ways to use your skills to brighten the season for others.

99 **Party of Two** A perfect pair for a perfect pair. Homemade risotto and seared scallops provide the perfect excuse to dine in.

100 **Kids in the Kitchen** Ho, ho, ho! Feed Santa well this year with twice the treats. From savory to sweet, they'll ensure you land on the "nice" list.

102 **Roadfood** Start 2012 off right with regional dishes devoured for good luck (and their great taste). *TOH* food writers Jane and Michael Stern share the country's best in New Year's eats.

104 **Field Editors** A Canadian Field Editor shares her prowess with appetizers along with her favorite bite-size offerings, plus profiles of three FE's with a knack for jazzing up hot drinks, and our full list of 1,000 Field Editors.

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Look for our Field Editors!

From every state and Canadian province, these volunteers share recipes and tips with our staff, readers and online community, and spread the *TOH* love in their areas.

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FE **This icon** next to a name means the person is a *Taste of Home* Field Editor!

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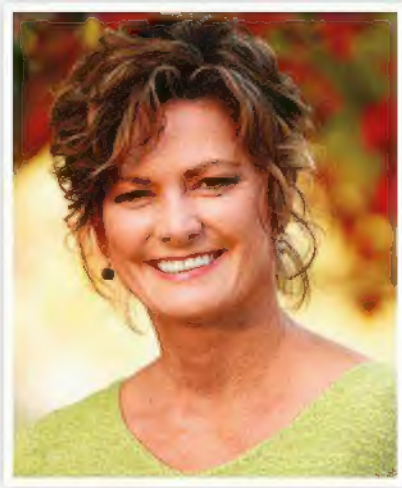
ILLUSTRATION: ANNIKA HUETT

Cozy Up to Family Traditions



As the holidays draw near, we all get nostalgic, recalling and anticipating the celebration of family traditions. We Cassidys have quite a few, as my sisters, Jan and Mary, and my brother, Jim, helped me remember: the music (those albums from the Firestone tire dealership that played nonstop), *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, giggling during carols at midnight Mass, fighting over who would place Baby Jesus in the manger, pictures in PJs holding our favorite presents, visiting neighbors for festive fun. And, of course, the food: buttery spritz cookies, fudge, takeout Chinese for Christmas Eve, prime rib the next day, crab cioppino at the Burnetts' on New Year's. My mother loved Christmas—still does—and she went all out to make it special for us kids.

It stands to reason, then, that establishing traditions for my own children was very important to me. So it was gratifying to get responses from my 20-year-old daughter, Jess, to my callout for favorite holiday memories. Here they are, in her own words:

- ***Mariah Carey's Christmas CD.*** *Obviously.* (Yes, it plays at least five dozen times every December. If she's not to your taste, best stay away from my house.)
- ***I like that we always have a real Christmas tree.*** *The hours-long process of picking it out, setting it up, lighting and decorating it is always an adventure. And it really does look—and smell—magical when it's all done.*
- ***The weird puppet-doll Christmas shows*** *from the 1960s. Classics.* (These, of course, were cutting-edge in my day.)
- ***Watching* A Christmas Story** *at least four times every year and still finding it hilarious.*
- ***The silly Christmas decorations*** *that I've grown to love—including Mom's eighth-grade photo ornament that always makes its way to the front of the tree.* (Despite my protests.)

As I read these, I'm delighted to discover that what was special for Jess, with the possible exception of Mariah Carey's tunes, involved family togetherness. That's what makes a holiday tradition special, after all.

At *Taste of Home*, we love traditions, too. This issue is packed with fabulous recipes and ideas for creating memorable family times—like our Sunday dinner on *page 20*, our salute to Hanukkah's latkes on *page 36*, fabulous midnight snacks from around the globe to help you make New Year's Eve special on *page 28* and much more. Looking for a new tradition with even more meaning? Read our "Cooks Who Care" feature on *page 98* to learn how to give back to your community this season.

I'm also pleased to share our big, beautiful special section, "A Year of Living Amazingly," which is packed with recipes, tips and great advice for making 2012 a success. The special section starts on *page 69*.

Jess had one more wonderful thought to share:

This sounds corny and clichéd, but now that I'm a little more grown-up, *my favorite part about Christmas is being with family I don't get to see nearly often enough. I love being reminded of how things were when we were little kids, and traditions help me remember. At a time in my life when almost everything is uncertain, it's comforting to know that some things will never change.*

Peace to you all at this holiday season, and best wishes for all good things in the year ahead.

Catherine

CATHERINE CASSIDY Editor-in-Chief

Making Merry My little girls, Jess and Jackie, *above*, posing for the requisite "Christmas in jammies" photo about 16 years ago.

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Our Readers Share the Love...

Dear Jane...

I like to bake my way through the holidays—the easy way. So over the years I've developed a less hectic, three-step method of cookie-making. It minimizes kitchen clutter and is easier on the baker. With these simple steps, baking cookies is fun.

MAKE & SHAPE On Day 1, I make cookie dough for three different recipes, shape the cookies and put them in separate airtight containers. I store them in the refrigerator overnight. Then I clean up the kitchen.

BAKE When I get home from work the next day, I line cookie sheets with parchment paper—which makes cleanup a breeze—and put the prepared cookies on the sheets to soften a bit while I pop something in the oven for supper. When dinner is done, the oven's ready for cookie-baking. (Heating the oven once conserves energy.)

DECORATE On Day 3, I put my creative skills to the test and decorate the cookies. Several colors of frosting go into separate bags, then I become a cookie artist!

I hope you get a chance to bake with—or for—your family. And I wish you warm, quiet evenings sipping a hot beverage and sampling your treasure of cookies! Happy holidays!

***TOH* editorial assistant Jane Stasik reads all your letters and emails. Drop her a line at dearjane@tasteofhome.com.**

LOVE LETTER ANNUAL TRADITION

I have subscribed to *Taste of Home* for over 13 years. Many years ago you ran a recipe for Red, White and Blueberry Pie. One day my dad picked up my magazine and spotted that recipe. He told me, "This looks good, but it's probably too difficult for you." Of course I had to make it for him. Now I make it each year in my dad's memory. Thank you for the lovely memory of Dad and the lovely annual tradition of making his favorite pie.
—VICKY STEVENS PERRIS, CALIFORNIA

Tried and True

This is the first time I have ever written to a magazine but I just had to brag on your excellent recipe for Marvelous Cannoli Cake (*Taste of Home*, August/September). I don't have time to do fancy baking anymore but I needed something nice to take to a funeral dinner for a special friend's family. I remembered seeing this beautiful cake in *Taste of Home* so I decided to make it. It was easy to assemble. When I retrieved my empty cake plate, I was told everyone had raved about the cake.

Taste of Home is the ONLY magazine whose recipes I would try and then take to an important event, sight unseen. I would never even think of doing that with any other magazine's recipes. So, once again you've proved yourselves worthy of my yearly subscription.
—SCEVA GLENN HULL, GEORGIA

Birthday Cannoli Cake ▲

My mom made the Marvelous Cannoli Cake (*Taste of Home*, August/September), *above*, for my brother Marc's birthday. It came out looking like a twin of the one in your picture. Oh, and the cake was amazing.
—GINA INFANTE
PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA

A Venture for Two

I showed the cannoli cake recipe to my Italian husband. We are retired and we both enjoy cooking, so we made this a joint venture. The cake looked and tasted delicious.
—NANCY VISCARDI
MURRIETA, CALIFORNIA

A Portable Twist

Who doesn't love walking into an Italian bakery and seeing the delicate, crispy cannoli shells filled with ricotta and Mascarpone cheese? So I couldn't wait to try the Marvelous Cannoli Cake recipe. But because I needed something portable, I made my own version: cupcakes topped with chocolate meringues and chopped almonds. My coworkers loved them and they were the hit of my niece's baptism party.
—SUSAN MCLEAN
SALEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Gifted Surprise

I recently received your beautiful cookbook *Taste of Home Christmas 2011* as a present. I was surprised and delighted to find that my recipe for Pretzel Cookies was in it! I'm so hooked on the wonderful recipes in your magazine and cookbooks that I try a recipe from one of them at least twice a week. Our son even makes it a point to come over once a week to try one of the *TOH* meals I've made. I know I'll continue to enter your fabulous contests.
—JOHNNA JOHNSON
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

Teen With Good Taste!

My 13-year-old granddaughter, Eden, has been cooking and baking *Taste of Home* recipes for about a year. It seems she wants to use recipes only from your magazine rather than cookbooks because they are so good. ■
—JUDY KRIEG
QUINNESEC, MICHIGAN

TALK TO US! We welcome your comments and photos at **editors@tasteofhome.com**. Each issue, one lucky reader will receive a *TOH* apron for sending in our favorite "love" letter of the month. Vicky Stevens, your apron is on its way!

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Talk of the Table Give cheese balls the sparkle they deserve with ornament handled spreaders, **target.com.** *$10*

The Stocking Market

You hang them **with such care.** Why not fill them **the same way?**

BY **ELIZABETH RUSSELL** | ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ALLI ARNOLD**

Lip Service This lip balm blends color, sugar and antioxidants to fight wrinkles and add shine. Sugar Honey Tinted Lip Treatment, **fresh.com.** *$23*

Salty or Sweet Why not both? This bar pairs potato chips with milk chocolate. *Sooooo* good. Potato Chips in Chocolate, **chuaochocolatier.com.** *set of 3, $18*

No Ordinary Joe Dr. Drip Coffee is a brilliant single-serve, drip-brewing system that sits on your mug. **drdripcoffee.com.** *$9*

Class Clink These silver wishbone ice tongs dress up a tabletop and make chilling those glasses ever so easy. Silver Wishbone Ice Tongs, **loadedtrunk.com.** *$19*

Wise Old Goat Handmade from pure goat milk, this stuff is a blessing to dry and unhappy skin. Beekman 1802 Scent of Winter soap, **shop.beekman1802.com.** *$10*

Bakers need bling, too!

Add jingle by sewing on inexpensive bells from a hobby store.

Tantalizing Totems Give the baker in your life these sweet mixer and muffin-pan pewter charms that come as a set on an 18-inch chain. Charms 4 You, **etsy.com.** *$18*

Step One You can't have a stuffer without a stocking. This comfy one looks handmade, without the work. Cable Knit Stocking, **target.com.** *$13*

12 creative gifts to give during this holiday season

PRESENT PERFECT

We share our prime picks for everyone on your holiday gift list. | BY LISA FREDERICK

Cheep Chic Jam out while cooking with the chicBuds Fauvette portable speaker. It's rechargable and plugs into any micro jack. **chicbuds.com**. *$35-40*

Light Touch Grillers hate wind because it blows out their flickers. Save them with this flame-free gadget that uses superheated air to ignite coals. Looftlighter, **amazon.com**. *$80*

Pop Star Babycakes' Cake Pop Maker puts the trendy treats on the table quickly. Just add batter and bake. **thebabycakesshop.com**. *$25*

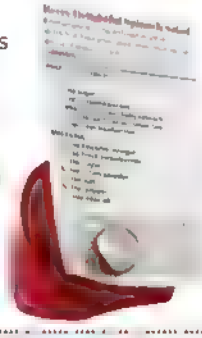
Keep Up With the Jonesing For your favorite coffee addict: The Mr. Coffee Cafe Latte maker brews and froths at the press of a button. **bedbathandbeyond.com**. *$100*

Such a Pretty Dish Classic Asian design meets mod lines and hot colors in Le Creuset's oven-safe stoneware Wok Dish. **lecreuset.com**. *$30*

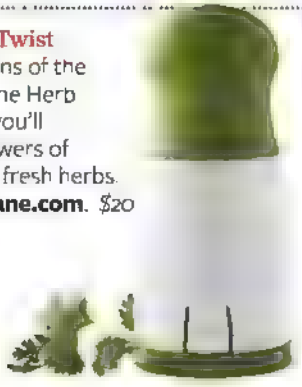
Red Alert What a find for Malbec and Merlot drinkers and dribblers! A squirt of Cork Pops Vino 911 erases most red wine stains from textiles **corkpops.com**. *$5*

Seal the Deal For a true foodie, splurge on a SousVide Supreme Demi package to enjoy this French cooking technique at home. **sousvidesupreme.com**. *$400*

Rock of Pages The tiny Recipe Rock holds recipes upright for easy viewing and saves valuable counter space **breadtopia.com** *$10*



At Your Fingertips Tikoli's lovely tea towels are functional art for the kitchen. Use them to dry hands or wrap up homemade goodies **tikoli.com**. *$12*



A Tasty Twist A few turns of the Microplane Herb Mill and you'll have showers of chopped fresh herbs. **microplane.com**. *$20*

Flash in the Pan A hybrid of a wok and skillet, Beka Cookware's 11-inch Panwok is a multitasker extraordinaire **kitchenclique.com**. *$50*

Loaf Around Rabbit Creek's beer and wine bread mixes, in flavors such as Cheese and Bacon Chardonnay, are a foodie's delight. Check out the bucket breads, too **rabbitcreekgourmet.com**. *$6-13*

Half Baked *Or Not At All*

One reader discovers that **begging and borrowing** are sometimes **required** during holiday baking.

Every year I'm reminded of how much I love holiday baking. It's something I eagerly anticipate, like Christmas morning. I carefully choose my recipes and plan and prepare my baking with delight. But one year, on the day I was to begin my efforts, my oven stopped working. I couldn't believe it. What was I to do? I refused to let it interfere with my planning. I just had to bake! That night, I measured out all the ingredients I would need and put them in labeled containers, with the plan of finding another oven. Happily, my son and daughter-in-law allowed me to bake all my holiday breads and cookies in their oven. It took quite a bit of time and effort, but everyone was very appreciative of their goodies, which made it worth all the work. —**JOAN WILSON** MARTINSVILLE, VIRGINIA

Top Tips

Avoid these common party pitfalls and **have a ball!**

- **Stressing over decor.** Fill glass hurricanes with pinecones or cranberries or arrange evergreen boughs in tall glass vases. —*Katie Brown, katiebrownblog.com*
- **Apologizing to guests.** Bite your tongue when something doesn't turn out. It only emphasizes what went wrong. —*Sandy Coughlin, reluctantentertainer.com*
- **Shouldering the load alone.** Go potluck or share duties with a pal. You can even assign jobs to guests as they arrive. It gets them mingling. —*Kate Payne,* The Hip Girl's Guide to Homemaking.

SURVEY SAYS

Salted or unsalted butter? It's an age-old argument. To settle it, we asked our Facebook fans which they prefer. **Of 637 votes, unsalted won**—but only by a few votes! Guess it's not settled after all. Bake on!

HIDE & SEEK

Holiday Extravaganza

Our popular contest just got more bountiful with more chances to win $50 at Shop Taste of Home.

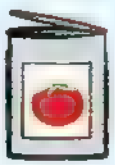
Hint: In our November issue, the hidden wishbone was found in the Sage Sausage Dressing on page 84.

FIND THE:

Tomato

Sugar Cookie

Spoon



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ENTER AT

tasteofhome.com/contest

100 winners will be drawn from entries with one or more of the correct answers. Or mail a postcard with the page number(s) and your name, address and phone number to Hide & Seek, Taste of Home, 5400 S. 60th St., Greendale, WI 53129 Winners are drawn at random.

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Gimme 5 *Cookie Crazed*

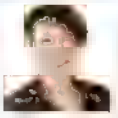
Most people have a cookie that **sums up the season in one incredible bite.** Our staff members sample hundreds of cookies yearly, so we asked for their **must-have holiday cookie.**

Norwegian sandbakkels! We make them every year. They go fast in our house, so we also travel to a Norwegian bakery in northern Wisconsin to buy their entire stash **—JAMI GEITTMANN** ART DIRECTOR, SPECIAL INTEREST PUBLICATIONS

I call them Man Things. Not sure why it's a **peanut butter cookie with a chocolate kiss** in the middle. I can easily eat 30 in a single sitting. **—NICK MORK** ART DIRECTOR, *HEALTHY COOKING* MAGAZINE

was in a cookie exchange group for years, and my signature cookies were **chocolate-dipped creams.** They're pretty, tender, buttery and delicate in flavor **—BLANCHE COMISKEY** EDITORIAL ASSISTANT, *REMINISCE* MAGAZINE

Every single cookie or bar you can think of, but especially **spritz cookies.** We make batch after batch—all different in color, flavor and decorations. **—VICKI JENSEN** EDITORIAL PROJECT ASSISTANT



A German spice cookie called speculaas. We bake them very thin and crisp, in the shape of tiny bears or **gingerbread people,** and give them as gifts. **—IRENE YEH** RECIPE EDITOR

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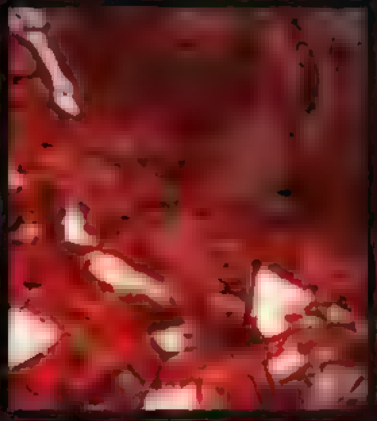

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openhouse

BRIGHT IDEAS for welcoming friends & family into your home

Look Inside! Custom features and thoughtful design turn a past-its-prime kitchen into a dream-come-true space.

Second Time's a Charm

A **whole-house overhaul** gives this family a chance to ret[illegible] the kitchen for their evolving needs. | BY LISA FREDERICK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM WIELAND

Holiday Prep The kitchen island makes a cozy gathering spot for Cheri Potratz and her kids Amy and Max to wrap up homemade holiday cookies. "I always have someone sampling my treats while I'm baking," she says.

A Total Card Daughter Amy often designs the Potratzes' annual Christmas card. This one is a spoof on the "perfect family."

For Cheri and Lon Potratz, two decades of raising a family had taken a toll—on their house, that is. The Omro, Wisconsin, ranch bore the scuffs and scratches of life with four active kids, increasingly obvious as the nest began to empty. "After the oldest two kids moved out, we decided it was time for a change," Cheri says. The Potratzes embarked on a comprehensive remodel that reconfigured the home's main floor, and Cheri, a passionate cook, pounced on the opportunity to create her dream kitchen.

She and Lon spent six months designing the layout of the new space, sketching and resketching detailed plans on graph paper. Non-negotiables on their wish list included a professional-grade range, custom cabinetry and generous counter space. Next came the challenging part: setting up camp in the finished basement while construction progressed. "My kitchen consisted of an electric fry pan, slow cooker, pizza oven and a microwave," Cheri says. "I have to admit we ate out a lot."

Elegant and ultrafunctional, the revamped room turned out to be well worth the temporary hassle. "Everything's within easy reach," Cheri says. Pullout spice racks and a Viking microwave flank the range, while twin recycling chutes (Lon's idea) next to the range make waste disposal a snap—discards slide into bins in the garage.

Cheri also loves being able to supervise the front yard as she works at the sink area. "I can watch (tween son) Max play with friends and see all the comings and goings," she says.

Daughter Amy, who has an artistic bent, helped choose the kitchen's colors and surfaces. Walnut flooring and maple cabinetry, including panels that conceal the dishwasher, fridge and freezer, warm the room. Quartz countertops lend the look of natural stone but require far less maintenance.

Although Cheri has had to adjust to cooking for three instead of six, the kitchen remains a family hot spot. "It's common for one of the kids to stop home for supper or breakfast," Cheri says. And during the holidays, the room works overtime, from cookie baking and casual parties to feasts during Green Bay Packers games.

"The holidays and Packer football go hand in hand at our house," Cheri says, adding that Max, Amy and their brothers, Adam and Jake, are there for every kickoff. "And of course I'm in the kitchen watching pregame coverage and cooking." ■

Surviving a Remodel

There's no getting around it: Making do without a full kitchen is a pain. Minimize frustrations with a little strategic planning. Here are a few tips for getting meals on the table in the midst of remodeling chaos.

Pare Down to Essentials You won't be able to use every pot and pan you own, much less all of your gadgets, so keep the basics available and store the rest.

Keep Meals Simple Prepackaged convenience foods, purchased rotisserie chickens, quick fix salads or sandwiches and occasional takeout will save your sanity. And consider using recyclable or biodegradable plates, cups, napkins and utensils for simple cleanup.

Think Portable Borrow or buy a mini-fridge, if you can, and rely on small appliances such as a slow cooker, toaster oven, coffeepot and electric skillet.

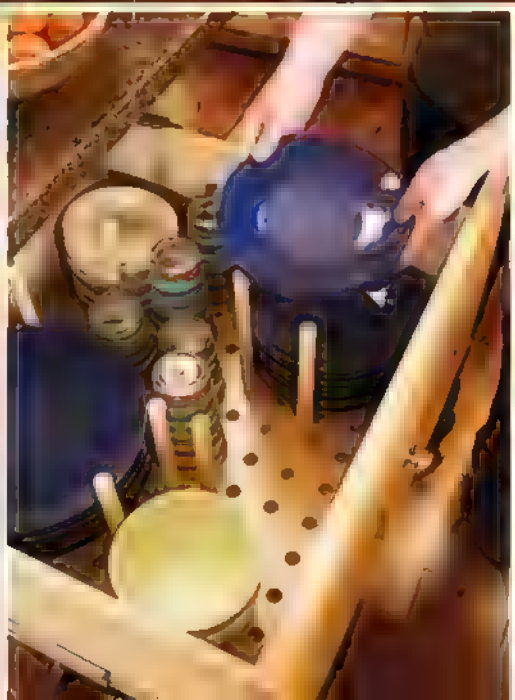
Remember the Grill Use it like a stove to boil water, sauté veggies and pan-fry meats, or try foil-packet cooking. You can even heat rolls or bake pizza.

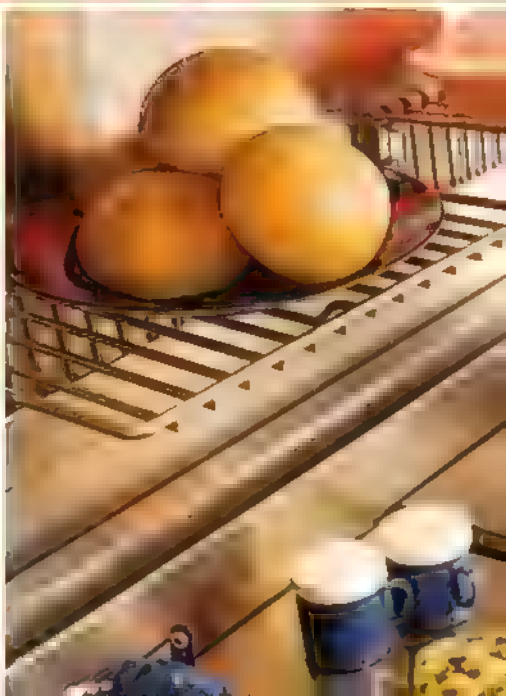
Keep It in Perspective The project won't last forever, and you will get through it. And the payoff—a fresh-faced kitchen that functions just as you want it to—will more than make up for the bumps along the way.

HAVE A GREAT KITCHEN? We'd love to see it! Send photos (including "before" shots if it's a remodel) plus a family photo to **editors@tasteofhome.com**. If we feature your kitchen, you'll receive **$250**.

REMODELING YOUR KITCHEN? Get more great ideas at **tasteofhome.com/kitchentour**

island serves as a
central prep space
and gathering spot.
Task Master The new Viking range, with griddle and double ovens, is ideal for cooking for a crowd.
Clever Solution Built-in chutes make sorting recyclables easy and help eliminate odors.
Custom Design Adjustable dowels let Cheri stack and store dishware in various sizes.
Convenience Item Warming shelves on the range hood can heat plates and keep foods toasty until serving time.





Tradition Comes Back

A rule-breaking family discovers that **a classic Christmas feast** can be **truly revolutionary.**

BY **RACHAEL LISKA** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAN ROBERTS**

Holiday Menu
• Mustard & Cranberry Glazed Ham
• Lentil White Bean Pilaf
• Brussels Sprouts & Cauliflower Gratin
• Chunky Garlic Mashed Potatoes
• Sweet Holiday Carrots
• Seeded Butternut Squash Braid
• Dark Chocolate Flourless Cake
Set a Simple Scene
The holiday's very best isn't about grand productions. All it takes are great food, a few festive touches and seats for those near and dear.

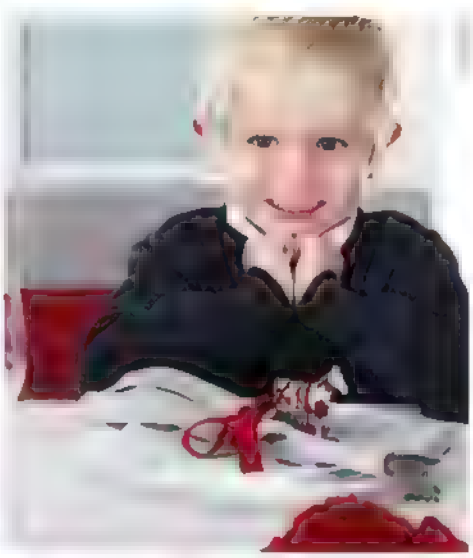
Some people might categorize Christmas dinner as a not-to-be-messed-with holiday tradition. And as perhaps the most important meal of the year, I get that. But for my family, this annual feast is about breaking the rules.

I'm not sure whose idea it was to replace Christmas dinner with an out-of-our-ham-and-mashed-potatoes-comfort-zone version, but I remember treading into it nervously that first year when we took on French cuisine and served coq au vin.

Here's how it works: Each year, each family member is assigned a course—cocktails (yes, that's a course), appetizers, sides, entree and dessert. The dish has to be authentic from the region on which we all agree. Most times, we tackle a new flavor or ingredient, resulting in occasional epic fails—such as the time we tried to jaw down my sister's insalata di polipi, or octopus salad (Italian, year three). After a few awkward minutes of unrelenting chewing, we broke out in laughter and merciless teasing.

As we sit around the table on Christmas Day, I sometimes picture what the scene must look like from the outside. You know, like a Norman Rockwell painting. Except instead of turkey showcased on a platter, it's a steaming heap of red crawfish and cobbed corn on my mom's dining room table (Cajun, year five). And instead of passing the green beans, it's a bowl of saag paneer (Indian, year eight). But the hearty laughter and old-fashioned family togetherness? That is picture-perfect.

This year, Christmas dinner falls on Sunday, and we decided to break the rules yet again: We're taking on traditional. I'm so excited for ham and potatoes, such as those in the recipes here. And I'll be sure to get my fill—unless someone tries to slip some octopus salad into the mix.



Mustard & Cranberry Glazed Ham

This delicious glaze uses only four ingredients. It's a simple way to ensure your ham is the hit of the holidays
—**NELLA PARKER** HERSEY, MICHIGAN

PREP: 15 MIN.
BAKE: 1 HOUR 50 MIN. + STANDING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS (4 CUPS SAUCE)

- **1 fully cooked bone-in ham (6 to 8 lbs.)**
- **Whole cloves**
- **3 cans (14 oz. each) jellied or whole-berry cranberry sauce**
- **1½ cups packed brown sugar**
- **1½ cups dry red wine or chicken broth**
- **3 Tbsp. Dijon mustard**

1. Place ham on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. If desired, score the surface of the ham, making diamond shapes ½ in. deep. Insert cloves into the surface. Loosely cover ham with foil; bake at 325° for 1½ hours.
2. In a large saucepan, combine the cranberry sauce, brown sugar and wine. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from the heat; whisk in mustard.
3. Pour 2 cups cranberry mixture over ham. Bake 20-30 minutes longer or until a meat thermometer reads 140°. Let stand for 10 minutes before slicing. Serve with remaining sauce.

All the Trimmings

Creating a holiday wonderland is easier than you think. *Clockwise from upper left:*

- Use masses of a single flower, such as red carnations, to keep centerpieces simple and vibrant.
- Delight the littlest of diners with a small toy waiting at the table.
- Add cheer to place settings with basic bows in red and classic-looking ornaments.
- Carry the theme from table to chair by wrapping each seat with a large red bow. Fabric tape can help hold them in place.

Center of Attention

A bone-in ham offers showstopping presentation and big, juicy taste.

- The bone-in ham tends to have more flavor and better texture than boneless. Plus the bone's a bonus to use in soups.
- Need help slicing your ham? We've got a guide at **tasteofhome.com/hamslicing**.

Lentil White Bean Pilaf

Brussels Sprouts &
Cauliflower Gratin

Chunky Garlic
Mashed Potatoes

Sweet Holiday
Carrots

Lentil White Bean Pilaf

Vegetarians will be happy to see this hearty and flavorful meatless grain pilaf on the holiday buffet table.

—**JULI MEYERS** HINESVILLE, GEORGIA

PREP: 35 MIN. • **COOK:** 15 MIN.
YIELD: 10 SERVINGS

- **1 cup dried lentils, rinsed**
- **½ cup quick-cooking barley**
- **⅓ cup quinoa, rinsed**
- **⅓ cup uncooked long grain rice**
- **½ lb. sliced baby portobello mushrooms**
- **3 medium carrots, finely chopped**
- **3 celery ribs, finely chopped**
- **1 large onion, finely chopped**
- **¼ cup butter, cubed**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 tsp. minced fresh rosemary or ½ tsp. dried rosemary, crushed**
- **½ cup vegetable broth**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **½ tsp. pepper**
- **2 cups canned white kidney or cannellini beans, rinsed and drained**

1. Cook the lentils, barley, quinoa and rice according to package directions and set aside.
2. In a Dutch oven, saute the mushrooms, carrots, celery and onion in butter until tender. Add garlic and rosemary; cook 1 minute longer. Add broth, salt and pepper, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Stir in beans and the cooked lentils, barley, quinoa and rice; heat through.

Brussels Sprouts & Cauliflower Gratin

I combined two favorite vegetables in this creamy gratin for a family-friendly dish. Topped with crunchy panko bread crumbs and savory Italian cheeses, this side dish can be ignored while it cooks.

—**PRISCILLA GILBERT**
INDIAN HARBOUR BEACH, FLORIDA

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 30 MIN.
YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- **4 cups fresh cauliflowerets**
- **4 cups fresh brussels sprouts, quartered**
- **4 bacon strips, chopped**
- **1 large sweet onion, chopped**
- **4 garlic cloves, minced**
- **¼ cup all-purpose flour**
- **1½ cups 2% milk**
- **⅔ cup half-and-half cream**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **¼ tsp. pepper**
- **½ cup panko (Japanese) bread crumbs**
- **⅓ cup grated Parmesan and Romano cheese blend**

1. Place cauliflower and brussels sprouts in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes or until crisp-tender; drain.
2. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp. Remove to paper towels with slotted spoon; drain, reserving drippings. Saute onion and garlic in bacon drippings until tender. Stir in flour until blended; gradually add the milk, cream, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened.
3. Stir in cauliflower mixture and bacon. Transfer to a greased 2½-qt. baking dish. Cover and bake at 375° for 15 minutes.
4. Combine bread crumbs and cheese blend. Uncover vegetables; sprinkle with bread crumb mixture. Bake, uncovered, for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Chunky Garlic Mashed Potatoes

I like to dress these up with a whole bulb of roasted garlic. It may seem like overkill, but once the dish is cooked, any harshness mellows out and you're left with sweet, delicate and amazing garlic flavor.

—**JACKIE GREGSTON** HALLSVILLE, TEXAS

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN.
YIELD: 9 SERVINGS

- **3 lbs. Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into quarters**
- **1 whole garlic bulb, cloves separated and peeled**
- **½ cup butter, cubed**
- **½ cup half-and-half cream**
- **2 Tbsp. prepared horseradish**
- **¾ tsp. salt**
- **¾ tsp. pepper**
- **Fresh thyme leaves, optional**

1. Place potatoes and garlic cloves in a large saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
2. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, heat butter and cream; keep warm. Drain potatoes and garlic; return to pan. Add the horseradish, salt, pepper and butter mixture; mash to reach desired consistency. Garnish with thyme if desired.

Sweet Holiday Carrots

A glaze of dried cranberries plumped in a mixture of honey and lemon juice makes these tender carrots fit for the finest table.

—**DONNA MARIE RYAN** TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN.
YIELD: 5 SERVINGS

- **8 medium carrots, sliced**
- **⅓ cup water**
- **1 can (8 oz.) crushed pineapple, undrained**
- **¼ cup chopped peeled tart apple**
- **½ cup dried cranberries**
- **⅓ cup honey**
- **1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **1 Tbsp. butter, melted**
- **1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour**
- **½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **⅓ cup chopped walnuts, toasted**

1. Place carrots and water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes.
2. Add pineapple, apple, cranberries, honey, lemon juice and salt; cook for 3-4 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender, stirring occasionally.
3. Combine the butter, flour and cinnamon; stir into pan. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until sauce is thickened. Sprinkle with walnuts before serving.

Timetable and Tips

A little bit of planning makes it a breeze to serve up a stunning holiday feast.

- With a big crowd coming, go ahead and mix and match plates, cutlery and serving bowls. Guests will love the eclectic, cozy feel.
- Gather all your serving utensils the day before and place them in the mixing bowls you're using so you're not hunting for the gravy ladle or extra spoons at the last minute.
- As dishes rotate out of the oven, keep them toasty by covering them with dish towels. Keep the dishes in a closed cardboard box so they'll stay warm until serving time.

Seeded Butternut Squash Braid

Seeded Butternut Squash Braid

Crunchy green hulled pumpkin seeds—better known as pepitas—add a slightly nutty taste to this rich, moist bread. Pepitas can spoil quickly, so store them in the freezer to keep them fresh.
—**CHERYL PERRY** HERTFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

PREP: 45 MIN.+RISING • **BAKE:** 20 MIN
YIELD: 1 LOAF (18 SLICES)

- **2¾ cups uncooked cubed peeled butternut squash**
- **1 pkg. (¼ oz.) active dry yeast**
- **⅓ cup warm 2% milk (110° to 115°)**
- **2 Tbsp. warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **½ cup pepitas or sunflower kernels**
- **¼ cup butter, softened**
- **1 egg**
- **3 Tbsp. brown sugar**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **3½ to 4 cups all-purpose flour**

TOPPING

- **1 egg**
- **1 Tbsp. water**
- **¼ cup pepitas or sunflower kernels**

1. Place squash in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 15-20 minutes or until tender. Drain and mash squash (you will need 2 cups); cool to 110°-115°.
2. In a small bowl, dissolve yeast in warm milk and water. In a large bowl, combine the pepitas, butter, egg, brown sugar, salt, cooked squash, yeast mixture and 2 cups flour; beat on medium speed for 3 minutes. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough (dough will be sticky).
3. Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.
4. Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and divide into thirds. Shape each into a 26-in. rope; braid ropes. Transfer to a greased baking sheet and form into a circle, pinching the ends together to seal. Cover with a clean kitchen towel and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes.
5. For topping, beat egg and water; brush over braid. Sprinkle with pepitas. Bake at 350° for 18-23 minutes or until golden brown.

Dark Chocolate Flourless Cake

Use an extra-large piping tip to trim this cake with whipped cream, then add pomegranate seeds for emphasis.
—**VIVIAN TAYLOR** MIDDLEBURG, FLORIDA

PREP: 40 MIN.+COOLING • **BAKE:** 40 MIN.+COOLING • **YIELD:** 16 SERVINGS

- **1 cup pomegranate juice**
- **¾ cup sugar**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1 lb. bittersweet chocolate, chopped**
- **½ cup butter, cubed**
- **6 eggs**

GANACHE

- **6 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped**
- **¾ cup heavy whipping cream**
- **Optional garnishes: whipped cream, pomegranate seeds and confectioners' sugar**

1. Line the bottom of a buttered 9 in. springform pan with parchment paper; butter the paper and sides of pan. Place on a double thickness of heavy-duty foil (about 18 in. square). Securely wrap foil around pan.
2. In a small saucepan, bring pomegranate juice and sugar to a simmer, stirring to dissolve sugar, cook and stir 8-10 minutes or syrupy. Remove from the heat, stir in vanilla.
3. In a large saucepan, melt chocolate and butter over low heat, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat; stir in pomegranate mixture. Cool to room temperature.
4. Whisk eggs into chocolate mixture. Pour into prepared pan. Place in a large baking pan; add 1 in. of hot water to larger pan.
5. Bake at 350° for 40-50 minutes or until center is just set and top appears dull. Remove springform pan from the water bath and cool completely on a wire rack.
6. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; remove sides of pan. Place cake on a serving platter. For ganache, place chocolate in a small bowl. In a small saucepan, bring cream just to a boil. Pour over chocolate; whisk until smooth. Cool slightly, stirring occasionally.
7. Pour over cake, allowing ganache to drape down the sides. Let stand until set. Garnish just before serving. ■

MORE ONLINE
For more Christmas dinner recipes, visit **tasteofhome.com/Christmasdinner.**

“The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a happy family all wrapped up in each other.”

— BURTON HILLIS

IT'S MIDNIGHT SOMEWHERE

Show off your **international flair** with **stylish nibbles** that span the globe.

From *les petits villages* to large cities, from rustic hamlets to bustling burgs, partygoers around the world will ring in the New Year in their own ways. Take part in this universal celebration with appetizers inspired by lands near and far. Pass the bubbly! And the ouzo! And the whiskey!

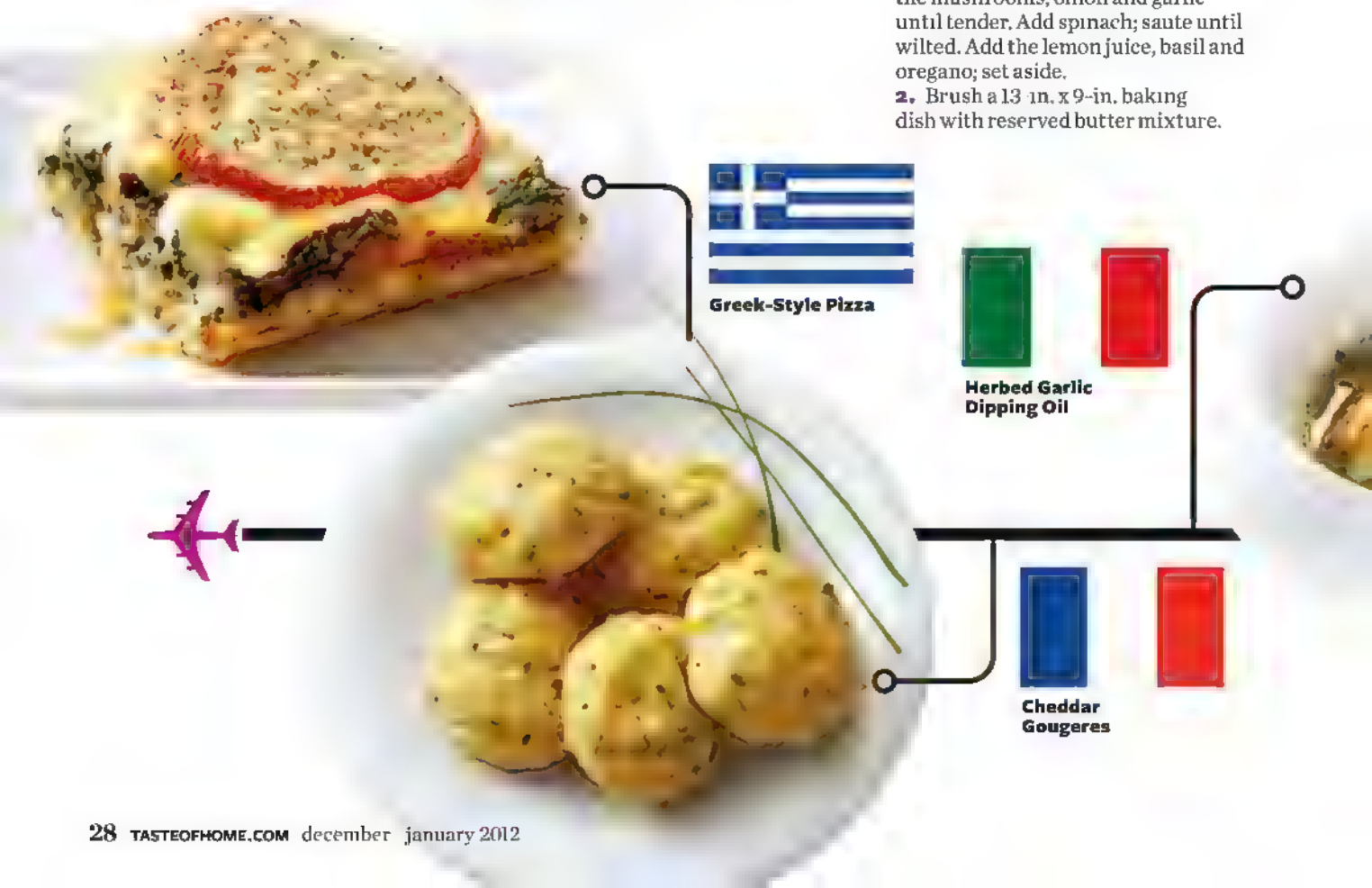
Greek Style Pizza

Bring the Greek isles to the party with this addictive appetizer pizza. Drain the tomato slices on a paper towel to soak up extra moisture and ensure a crisp crust.
—**CLAIRE TORRICE** OSWEGO, NEW YORK

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN
YIELD: 18 SERVINGS

- ¼ cup butter, cubed
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ lb. sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pkg. (10 oz.) fresh spinach, trimmed and coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 pkg. (16 oz., 14-in. x 9-in. sheet size) frozen phyllo dough, thawed
- 2 cups (8 oz.) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup (4 oz.) crumbled feta cheese
- 3 medium ripe tomatoes, sliced
- ½ cup seasoned bread crumbs

1. In a large skillet, melt butter. Transfer to a small bowl; add oil and set aside. In the same skillet, saute the mushrooms, onion and garlic until tender. Add spinach; saute until wilted. Add the lemon juice, basil and oregano; set aside.
2. Brush a 13-in. x 9-in. baking dish with reserved butter mixture.



Place one sheet of phyllo dough in baking dish; brush lightly with butter mixture. (Keep remaining phyllo covered with plastic wrap and a damp towel to prevent it from drying out.) Repeat layers with remaining phyllo, brushing each layer.

3. Top with the spinach mixture; sprinkle with cheeses. Coat both sides of tomato slices with bread crumbs; arrange over top. Bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until cheese is melted and crust is golden brown.

Herbed Garlic Dipping Oil

This herb-infused oil is an Italian favorite on New Year's and on all the other days of the year. Toss with hot pasta for a change, or simply use as a dipping oil.

—DAWN EMERY-RODRIGUEZ
FLORENCE, COLORADO

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN.
YIELD: 1 CUP PLUS 2 TBSP

- **1 cup olive oil**
- **16 to 20 fresh basil leaves**
- **¼ cup minced fresh rosemary**
- **4 tsp. minced garlic**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **½ cup balsamic vinegar**
- **Italian bread, torn**

Place the first five ingredients in a blender; cover and process until desired consistency. Transfer to a small bowl. Stir in vinegar. Serve with torn bread chunks

Cheddar Gougeres

Gougeres—French cheesy cream puffs—are usually made with Gruyère cheese, but I like to substitute a very sharp cheddar for bolder flavor. Give your own twist to this recipe with the cheese of your choice.

—BRIDGET KLUSMAN
OTSEGO, MICHIGAN

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN.
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- **1 cup water**
- **¼ cup butter, cubed**
- **2½ tsp. kosher salt, divided**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **4 eggs**
- **1½ cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- **½ cup minced fresh chives**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**

1. In a large saucepan, bring the water, butter and ½ tsp. salt to a boil. Add flour all at once and stir until a smooth ball forms. Remove from the heat; let stand for 5 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Continue beating until mixture is smooth and shiny. Stir in cheese, chives and garlic.

2. Drop by tablespoonfuls 1 in. apart onto greased baking sheets. Sprinkle with remaining salt. Bake at 375° for 14-16 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

British Beef Tenderloin & Pumpernickel Crostini

I use an ovenproof skillet when searing the tenderloin so I don't have to move it to a roasting pan. Plus, this method keeps the flavorful meat juices in the pan while the meat finishes, and you have only one pan to clean.

—SHARON TIPTON
WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 30 MIN. + STANDING
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- **1 Tbsp. olive oil**
- **1 beef tenderloin roast (2 lbs.)**
- **1 tsp. salt, divided**
- **½ tsp. coarsely ground pepper**
- **1 cup (8 oz.) sour cream**
- **¼ cup prepared horseradish**
- **2 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- **¼ tsp. paprika**
- **18 slices pumpernickel bread, halved**
- **3 Tbsp. butter, melted**
- **1 bunch watercress**

1. Rub oil over tenderloin; sprinkle with ¾ tsp. salt and pepper. In a large skillet, brown beef on all sides. Place roast on rack in a shallow roasting pan.

2. Bake, uncovered, at 425° for 25-35 minutes or until meat reaches desired doneness (for medium-rare, a meat thermometer should read 145°; medium, 160°; well-done, 170°). Let stand for 10 minutes before slicing thinly.

3. In a small bowl, combine the sour cream, horseradish, lemon juice, paprika and remaining salt. Chill until serving.

4. Brush both sides of the bread with butter and place on baking sheets. Bake at 425° for 4-6 minutes or until toasted, turning once.

5. Spread with sauce; top with beef. Garnish with watercress sprigs.

Miniature Shepherd's Pies, ***page 31***

British Beef Tenderloin & Pumpernickel Crostini

Ultimate Party MEATBALLS®

Ocean Spray Heinz

3 SIMPLE INGREDIENTS

30 DELIGHTED GUESTS

1 14-ounce can Ocean Spray® Jellied Cranberry Sauce

1 12-ounce bottle Heinz® Chili Sauce

1 2-pound bag frozen, pre-cooked, cocktail-size meatballs

Combine sauces in a large saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring until smooth. Add meatballs. Cover and cook for 15 minutes or until meatballs are heated through, stirring occasionally.

Makes 30 appetizer servings.

Combine the robust taste of Heinz® Chili Sauce and the tangy taste of Ocean Spray® Jellied Cranberry Sauce for a uniquely satisfying flavor guaranteed to be a hit!

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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY Entry Period begins 11/28/11 Entry Period ends 1/1/12. Voting ends 2/7/12. Eligible lega. residents of the 50 US/DC. at least 18 years old or age of majority in their state of residence. Go to www.ultimaterecipechallenge.com for Official Rules. Void where prohibited. ©H.J. Heinz Company L.P. 2011 All rights reserved. ©20.1 Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. All rights Reserved.

New York-Style Cheesecake Mousse

Miniature Shepherd's Pies

An Irish New Year's toast says, "May your right hand always be stretched out in friendship but never in want." We'd add, "May your other hand always have one of these love y p es n it."

—SUZANNE BANFIELD
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY

PREP: 40 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN
YIELD: 4 DOZEN

- ½ lb. ground beef
- ⅓ cup finely chopped onion
- ¼ cup finely chopped celery
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped carrot
- 1½ tsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp. pepper
- ⅔ cup beef broth
- ⅓ cup frozen petite peas
- 2 pkg. (17.3 oz. each) frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 3 cups mashed potatoes

1. In a large skillet, cook the beef, onion, celery and carrot over medium heat until beef is no longer pink; drain. Stir in the flour, thyme, salt, nutmeg and pepper until blended, gradually add the broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until sauce is thickened. Stir in peas, heat through. Set aside.
2. Unfold puff pastry. Using a floured 2¼ in. round cutter, cut 12 circles from each sheet (save scraps for another use). Press circles onto the bottoms and up the sides of ungreased miniature muffin cups.
3. Fill each with 1½ tsp. beef mixture; top or pipe with 1 Tbsp mashed potatoes. Bake at 400° for 13-16 minutes or until heated through and potatoes are lightly browned. Serve warm.

New York Style Cheesecake Mousse

Give th s dessert t me in the fridge and it gets even better. Once chi ed, it can be covered with plastic wrap and refr gerated up to three days. Berr es are optiona , but they're a festive way to dress up the dish.

—CAROLINE WAMELINK
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO

PREP: 20 MIN. + CHILLING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup confectioners' sugar
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. grated lemon peel
- ¾ cup heavy whipping cream, whipped
- ⅓ cup graham cracker crumbs
- 4 tsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- Sliced fresh strawberries, optional

1. In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, vanilla and lemon peel until fluffy. Fold in the whipped cream. Divide among 12 dessert dishes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.
2. Meanwhile, combine cracker crumbs and sugar in a small bowl; add butter and mix well. Press to a ¼-in. thickness on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 375° for 10-12 minutes or until light golden brown. Cool completely.
3. Just before serving, crumble graham cracker mixture; sprinkle over mousse. If desired, top with fresh strawberries. ■

MORE ONLINE:
Find more New Year's rec pes at
tasteofhome.com/newyears

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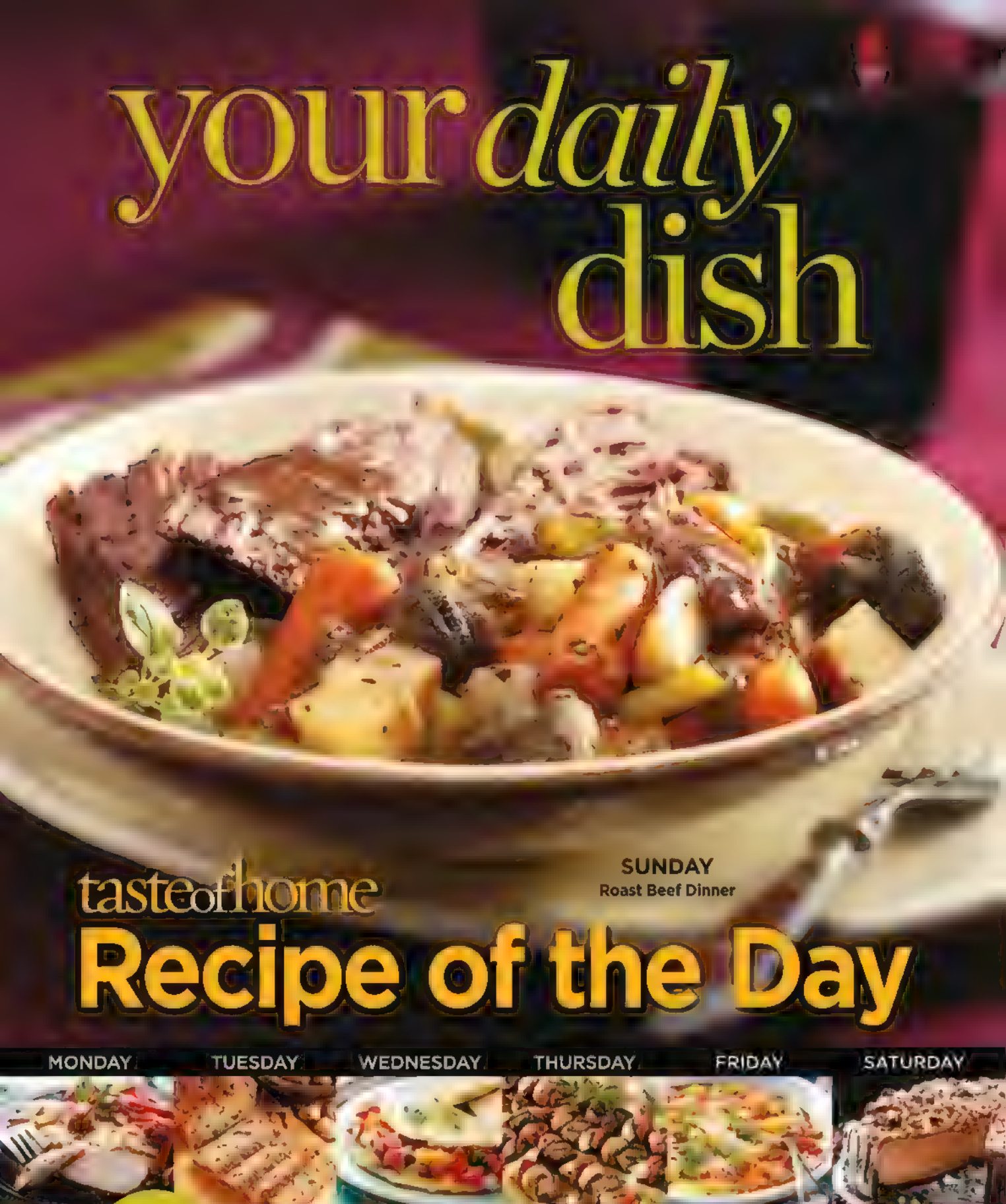
your daily dish



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Bite of the Best Amy Williams specializes in recipes that keep both cook and crew happy.

The Cookie Jar Is Always Full

This Texas mom used her **baking skills to sweeten up her life** with one of her favorite duos: chocolate and peanut butter.

In a recent global survey spanning 13,000 people in 17 countries, researchers discovered that the world's favorite color is overwhelmingly blue. It's too bad no one thought to ask Amy Williams of Fort Worth, Texas. Her answer would have been brown.

"What's not to love about brown food?" asks Amy, who has been cooking since she was 18 years old. "It's the color of roasted meats, rich gravies, perfectly baked rolls and bread and, of course, chocolate."

And brown could even be considered her lucky color, since it was the starring hue in the recipe, *at right*, that earned her a top prize in the Real Women of Philadelphia Casting Competition, a title that's changed her life. "It's an empowering experience. Since then, I've been inspired to be a better version of myself, for myself and for my family," says Amy. "I've also been inspired to create more wonderful edible creations for those I love."

But that sentiment is nothing new to this stay-at-home mom. "Love and cooking are always paired in the same sentence for me," she says. "I started to enjoy cooking as a teenager working at a catering company. It turned into love when I began cooking for my own family. I thrive on seeing loved ones smile when they eat a dish I've made. It's given me confidence in my cooking and to try other new things."

While she's always cooking and feeding others, Amy has a favorite stomach to fill—her husband's. "I love cooking for him. He works so hard and enjoys almost everything I make," she says. "I also make a mean PB&J for my picky 4-year-old son. Hopefully my 6-month-old son will enjoy them, too."

Along with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, Amy spoils her family with her winning recipe. "It was born out of desperation when I needed a dessert for a last-minute party. It all came from my pantry." Amy's winning cookies can also be found at **realwomenofphiladelphia.com**.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookies

For a smooth consistency and true peanut butter flavor, use regular peanut butter in the filling—not old-fashioned, freshly ground or reduced-fat versions.
—**AMY WILLIAMS** FORT WORTH, TEXAS

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH + COOLING • **YIELD:** 2 DOZEN

- **¼ cup butter, softened**
- **4 oz. Philadelphia Cream Cheese, softened**
- **2 eggs**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1 pkg. (18¼ oz.) chocolate cake mix**
- **¼ cup all-purpose flour**

FILLING

- **¾ cup creamy peanut butter**
- **4 oz. Philadelphia Cream Cheese, softened**
- **2½ cups confectioners' sugar**
- **3 Tbsp. 2% milk**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **12 miniature peanut butter cups, chopped**

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and cream cheese until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Gradually add cake mix and flour to creamed mixture and mix well.
2. Shape into 1-in. balls. Place 2 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets; flatten slightly. Bake at 375° for 6-8 minutes or until set. Cool for 1 minute before removing from pans to wire racks; cool completely.
3. For filling, beat peanut butter and cream cheese in a small bowl until fluffy. Add the confectioners' sugar, milk and vanilla; beat until smooth. Spread on the bottoms of half of the cookies; sprinkle with chopped peanut butter cups. Top with remaining cookies. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. ■

How Amy Cooks

- **Play with recipes more.** Borrow cookbooks from the library. Invite friends for dinner. Try a new dish weekly.
- **Try out garnishes.** It's as simple as arranging a few raw veggies or fresh herbs from the meal nicely on the plate.
- **Share your passion.** Talk to others about food and cooking, start a baking club, and visit cooking websites and blogs.

Chive & Onion Hash Brown Potatoes
Cheese & Crab Brunch Bake
Gingerbread Pancakes with Banana Cream

Jingle Bell Brunch

Park your sleigh and invite a crowd to a **memorable holiday brunch.** These high-impact, **low-effort recipes** combine delicious flavors with a dressed-up touch of whimsy, making them ideal for **a jolly bunch of eaters** on a special day.

Cheese & Crab Brunch Bake

Wake up to an easy Christmas morning with this do-ahead casserole for a crowd. Consider it the gift you give yourself.
—**JOYCE CONWAY** WESTERVILLE, OHIO

PREP: 30 MIN. + CHILLING • **BAKE:** 50 MIN.
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- **2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard**
- **6 English muffins, split**
- **8 oz. lump crabmeat, drained**
- **2 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- **2 tsp. grated lemon peel**
- **2 cups (8 oz.) shredded white cheddar cheese**
- **12 eggs**
- **1 cup half-and-half cream**
- **1 cup 2% milk**
- **½ cup mayonnaise**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **½ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **½ tsp. pepper**
- **2 cups (8 oz.) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **1 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **4 green onions, chopped**
- **¼ cup finely chopped sweet red pepper**
- **¼ cup finely chopped sweet yellow pepper**

1. Spread mustard over bottom half of muffins. Place in a greased 13 in. x 9-in. baking dish. Top with crab, lemon juice and peel. Sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Top with muffin tops; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, milk, mayonnaise, salt, cayenne and pepper. Pour over muffins; sprinkle with Swiss cheese, Parmesan cheese, onions and peppers. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
3. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Cover and bake at 375° for 30 minutes. Uncover; bake 20-25 minutes longer or until set. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

MORE ONLINE
For more Christmas brunch recipes, visit **tasteofhome.com/Christmasbrunch.**

Chive & Onion Hash Brown Potatoes

Purchased hash browns make this a quick success. Or start with fresh potatoes instead. Simply peel and shred enough to measure 8 cups. Save time by using a food processor fitted with a shredding disk.
—**BARB TEMPLIN** NORWOOD, MINNESOTA

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 45 MIN. + STANDING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- **1½ cups half-and-half cream**
- **1 cup spreadable chive and onion cream cheese**
- **2 Tbsp. dried minced onion**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **½ tsp. pepper**
- **2 pkg. (20 oz. each) refrigerated shredded hash brown potatoes**
- **2 cups shredded Swiss cheese**
- **3 Tbsp. minced fresh chives, divided**
- **2 Tbsp. butter, cubed**

1. In a small saucepan, combine first five ingredients. Cook and stir over medium heat until blended; transfer to large bowl. Add potatoes; mix well.
2. In a greased 13-in. x 9-in. or 3-qt. baking dish, layer a third of the hash brown mixture and a third of the cheese; sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. chives. Repeat layers. Top with remaining hash brown mixture and cheese and dot with butter.
3. Cover and bake at 375° for 35 minutes. Uncover; bake 10-20 minutes longer or until edges begin to brown. Let stand for 10 minutes before cutting. Sprinkle with remaining chives.

Gingerbread Pancakes with Banana Cream

Nothing captures the flavors of the season like these fluffy gingerbread pancakes. Prepare and refrigerate the batter two hours before cooking, and simply pour the batter on the griddle when guests arrive.
—**BARBARA BRITTAIN** SANTEE, CALIFORNIA

PREP: 25 MIN. • **COOK:** 5 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 42 PANCAKES (4⅔ CUPS TOPPING)

- **2 cups heavy whipping cream**
- **⅓ cup confectioners' sugar**
- **2 medium bananas, chopped**
- **¾ cup butter, softened**
- **1½ cups packed brown sugar**
- **6 eggs**
- **1½ cups molasses**
- **6 cups all-purpose flour**
- **4½ tsp. baking powder**
- **1 Tbsp. ground ginger**
- **1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon**
- **2¼ tsp. salt**
- **¾ tsp. ground allspice**
- **4 cups 2% milk**

1. In a large bowl, beat whipping cream until it begins to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar; beat until soft peaks form. Fold in bananas. Cover and chill until ready to serve.
2. In a very large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in molasses. Combine the flour, baking powder, ginger, cinnamon, salt and allspice; add to the creamed mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.
3. Pour batter by ¼ cupfuls onto a greased hot griddle; turn when bubbles form on top. Cook until the second side is golden brown. Serve with banana cream. ■

You Can Catch Me! The little old woman (and all your other guests) will happily run after gingerbread man pancakes made with holiday cookie cutters or pancake molds. Mini Holiday Pancake Molds, **williams-sonoma.com**, $20

Shredded Bliss

Potato pancakes are more than simply the delicious treats they appear to be. They capture a **belief in miracles**, making them integral to **Hanukkah celebrations.** | BY JOANNE WEINTRAUB

Latkes with Lox

The menorah, a nine-branched candleholder that glows in the windows of Jewish homes, is the most visible symbol of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. The potato latke—golden, aromatic, moist on the inside and blissfully crunchy on the outside—is the most delectable one.

Hanukkah, which starts this year on December 20th and lasts for eight days, celebrates an extraordinary event of some 2,200 years ago. After Jewish soldiers defeated the Assyrians, they set about restoring and purifying the desecrated holy temple in Jerusalem. For light, they had only a tiny vial of oil that should have burned for no more than a day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days, allowing time enough for the temple to be resanctified.

Different as they are, the menorah and latke both celebrate this miracle. Hanukkah oil lamps have given way to wax and electric candles. But there's only one way to fry a potato pancake: in oil, and lots of it.

A traditional latke is made with freshly grated or shredded potatoes (using a food processor isn't cheating) plus eggs, grated onion, salt, pepper and either flour or matzo meal. The usual topping is sour cream or applesauce, though some prefer just a sprinkling of sugar.

But in some places, the latke, like so many other traditional foods, has gone from humble to haute. Caviar sometimes tops the sour cream on the pancake. Public TV chef Ming Tsai puts wasabi in his latkes, while *Top Chef*'s Hubert Keller uses sweet potatoes and curry.

Many others have put their own touches on latkes. There are grated veggies, from beets to zucchini; goat cheese and olives; even shredded cooked chicken and garlic. If you want to savor some of these storied delights, try some of the recipes here. You don't even have to wait for Hanukkah.

MORE ONLINE:
For more Hanukkah recipes, visit **tasteofhome.com/hanukkah**

Latkes with Lox

Lox, a salty smoked salmon, is a year-round delicacy. This recipe, inspired by one from the *Jewish Journal*, uses lox as a topping.
—JOANNE WEINTRAUB MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

PREP: 20 MIN. • **COOK:** 5 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- **2 cups finely chopped onion**
- **¼ cup all-purpose flour**
- **6 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 tsp. salt**
- **1 tsp. coarsely ground pepper**
- **4 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **4 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and shredded**
- **¾ cup canola oil**

TOPPINGS

- **4 oz. lox**
- **Sour cream and minced fresh chives, optional**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first five ingredients. Stir in eggs until blended. Add potatoes; toss to coat.
2. Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Drop batter by ¼ cupfuls into oil; press to flatten. Fry in batches until golden brown on both sides, using remaining oil as needed. Drain. Serve with lox and, if desired, sour cream and chives.

Sauerkraut Latkes

Really? Sauerkraut in potato pancakes? Oh yes, when the apples mellow the tang so very nicely.
—AYSHA SCHURMAN AMMON, IDAHO

PREP: 20 MIN. • **COOK:** 5 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 2½ DOZEN

- **3 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and shredded**
- **1½ cups shredded peeled apples**
- **1½ cups sauerkraut, rinsed and well drained**
- **6 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **6 Tbsp. all-purpose flour**
- **3 tsp. salt**
- **1½ tsp. pepper**
- **¾ cup canola oil**
- **Sour cream and chopped green onions, optional**

1. In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, apples, sauerkraut and eggs. Combine the flour, salt and pepper; stir into potato mixture.
2. Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Drop batter by ¼ cupfuls into oil; press to flatten.
3. Fry in batches until golden brown on both sides, using remaining oil as needed. Drain on paper towels. If desired, top with sour cream and green onions.

Sauerkraut Latkes

Cheese & Red Pepper Latkes

These zesty latkes combine three cheeses with a handful of garlic and a colorful burst of red peppers. Shred the potatoes the night before to make dinner easier.
—CHRISTINE MONTALVO
WINDSOR HEIGHTS, IOWA

PREP: 30 MIN • **COOK:** 5 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- 3 large onions, finely chopped
- 3 medium sweet red peppers, finely chopped
- ½ cup butter, cubed
- 18 medium garlic cloves, minced, divided
- 1 Tbsp. celery salt
- 1 Tbsp. coarsely ground pepper
- 8 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and shredded
- 1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese
- 1½ cups (6 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup (4 oz.) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup sour cream
- ¾ cup canola oil
- Minced fresh parsley

1. In a large skillet, saute onions and red peppers in butter until tender. Add ¼ cup garlic, celery salt and pepper; cook 1 minute longer.
2. Transfer to a large bowl. Add the potatoes, cheeses, flour, sour cream and remaining garlic; mix well.
3. Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Drop batter by ¼ cupfuls into oil; press lightly to flatten. Fry in batches until golden brown on both sides, using remaining oil as needed. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with parsley.

Cheese & Red Pepper Latkes

Vanilla & Cinnamon Kissed Apple Latkes

Apples replace potatoes, with orange juice, cinnamon and vanilla helping to take this version to the dessert realm.
—CANDY MCMENAMIN LEXINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

PREP: 20 MIN • **COOK:** 5 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- 2 Tbsp. confectioners' sugar
- 2 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 cup 2% milk
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2¾ lbs. apples (about 6 large apples), peeled and shredded
- ¾ cup canola oil

1. In a small bowl, combine the confectioners' sugar and ground cinnamon; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Stir in the orange juice, milk, eggs and vanilla until blended; fold in apples.
3. Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Drop batter by ¼ cupfuls into oil; press lightly to flatten. Fry in batches until golden brown on both sides, using remaining oil as needed. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar. ■

Vanilla & Cinnamon-Kissed Apple Latkes

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2

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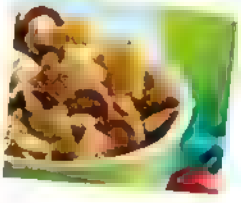

3 Package up the fun

Encourage guests to package their treats in holiday containers, bags or boxes. Start with the creative ideas found here, and find more inspiration at ChexPartyMixChange.com.

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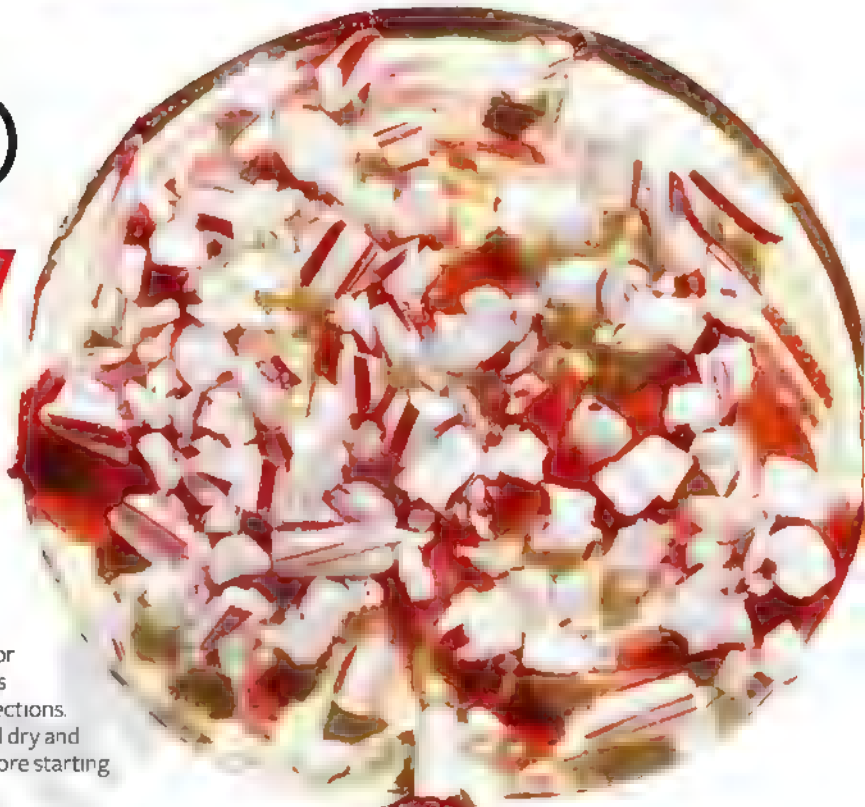
Can-Do Candy



Peppermint Lollipops, page 44

Keep these tips **top of mind** and you'll turn out **treats as tantalizing** as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*'s.

BY **KIRI TANNENBAUM**

1 **Check the Forecast** Rainy day—perfect for making candy, right? Not so fast. Humidity is the No. 1 culprit behind a bad batch of confections. Be sure the temperature outside is cool and dry and your kitchen is around 70 to 72 degrees before starting on your sweets.

2 **Safety First** You might be tempted to take a swipe of the sweet stuff as it bubbles on the stove, but don't do it. Sugar can reach temperatures upward of 300 degrees, and if you sneak a lick you're likely to wind up with a serious burn.

3 **Easy Access** Clear your counters of clutter and read the recipe to ensure that all the ingredients you'll need are front and center. Same goes for equipment. From spoons to spatula, be sure to have everything within easy reach of your workstation.

4 **No Substitutions** Repeat this mantra. *I will not make substitutions.* Do not swap skim milk for whole, no margarine in place of butter, and definitely do not replace sugar with an artificial sweetener. In order for candy to set right it must have the proper fat content, and altering any of these ingredients even slightly can lead to a sticky mess.

5 **Mercury Rising** Secure the thermometer to the side of your pot or pan. Never allow the tip to touch the bottom of the cooking vessel, as the metal will give you an inaccurate reading.

6 **Handle With Care** After all your labor, you'll want to store and protect your artistry properly. Once the candy is completely cool, individually wrap each one in cellophane and secure with a twist tie. Place in an airtight container to maintain freshness. ■

MORE ONLINE
For more candy recipes, visit **tasteofhome.com/xmascandy**.

Adventures in Candy Land

Lollipops celebrate **the kid in every one of us.** Indulge your inner 8-year-old with a **super-simple recipe** that will become a go-to holiday treat. Our test kitchen experts help you **master the skill.** | BY KIRI TANNENBAUM

Peppermint Lollipops

These lollipops can be made in any color and with any shape cookie cutter—gingerbread men, snowmen, Christmas trees and reindeer—so let your creative juices flow!

PREP: 5 MIN **COOK:** 30 MIN **YIELD:** 10 LOLLIPOPS

1½ cups sugar
¾ cup water
⅔ cup light corn syrup
½ tsp. cream of tartar
½ tsp. peppermint oil
Red and/or green paste food coloring
10 lollipop sticks
Crushed peppermint candies, optional

1. Butter 10 assorted metal cookie cutters and place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; set aside. In a large heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, water, corn syrup and cream of tartar. Cook and stir over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Bring to a boil. Cook, without stirring, until a candy thermometer reads 300° (hard-crack stage).
2. Remove from the heat. Stir in oil, keeping face away from mixture as aroma is strong. For each color, pour ¼ cup sugar mixture into a ramekin or custard cup; tint red or green.
3. Immediately pour remaining sugar mixture into prepared cookie cutters. Drizzle with colored mixtures as desired; cut through with a toothpick to swirl. Remove cutters just before lollipops are set; firmly press a lollipop stick into each. Sprinkle peppermint candies over tops if desired. ■

taste TESTED

A digital candy thermometer (in photo 1, above) takes the guesswork out of the sweet shop. Not only does this digital device flash and beep when the desired temperature is reached, it's less fragile than a traditional glass gauge, making it a snap to clean. Maverick CT-03 Digital Oil and Candy Thermometer, **thegourmetdepotco.com**, $22

How-To's

1 **Heat** Cook and stir candy ingredients over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Bring to a boil and cook, without stirring, until the candy thermometer reads 300°.
2 **Pour** After tint is prepared, carefully pour sugar mixture into each cookie cutter or mold. Syrup should fill the molds all the way to the edges.
3 **Design** Slowly drop in red or green tinted color mixture. Use a toothpick to carefully swirl in the color. Experiment with creating a pattern.
4 **Adorn** Just before the candy sets, remove from molds, insert stick and decorate with crushed peppermint pieces, or whatever candy you prefer

Almighty Anise

To assure good fortune, Roman brides had cakes with anise crumbled over their heads. Centuries later, **anise still delivers a licorice spark to savory and sweet alike** (brides, however, are spared), and in this case, an updated Roman/Italian classic—biscotti.

Gone to Seed

- Anise seed pairs well with seafood, root vegetables and apples, and shines in pastries, cakes, cookies and teas. To reap the best flavor, purchase the seeds whole and grind as needed.
- Whole star anise has a similar licorice taste, but it comes from a different plant. It's often used whole in Asian-inspired dishes, soups and teas.

Perfect Match Milk chocolate adds luxurious sweetness to these dunkable treats

Chocolate-Dipped Anise Biscotti

Wrap these up for friends and family to enjoy with coffee or tea.
—LESLIE KELLEY, KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON

PREP: 35 MIN. • **BAKE:** 40 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 4 DOZEN

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. anise extract
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1½ cups sliced almonds, toasted
- 2 Tbsp. aniseed
- 10 oz. milk chocolate candy coating, melted

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and extract. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in almonds and aniseed.
2. Divide dough in half. On a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, shape each portion into a 12-in. x 2-in. rectangle. Bake at 325° for 25-30 minutes or until firm to the touch and the edges are golden brown.
3. Cool on pans on wire racks. When cool enough to handle, transfer to a cutting board and cut diagonally with serrated knife into ¾-in. slices. Return to baking sheets, cut side down.
4. Bake for 6-7 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool completely. Dip each cookie halfway into melted candy coating, allowing excess to drip off. Place on waxed paper until set. Store in airtight containers. ■

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Domino SUGAR

with the Domino® Sugar 1001 Cookie Starter!

Turn your kitchen into a holiday workshop with **Domino® Sugar's 1001 Cookie Starter** – the secret recipe to creating dozens of different homemade holiday cookies from just one easy mix.

1. **Assemble** the **1001 Cookie Starter** – use right away or save for when you are ready to bake
2. **Add** specialty ingredients along with cups of the **1001 Cookie Starter** to make various cookies: *gingerbread, sugar cookies, fudge balls, brownies, pinwheel cookies and more.*
3. **Wrap** up all your different cookies to give as holiday gifts, then wait for the smiles!

Domino® Sugar 1001 Cookie Starter

5	cups all-purpose flour
3 3/4	cups Domino® Granulated Sugar
2	tablespoons baking powder
2	teaspoons salt
1 1/2	cups plus 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, softened

In a 4-quart bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. **Stir** until thoroughly blended. **Add** butter and use pastry blender or clean hands to work into dry ingredients until mixture resembles coarse meal. Makes 10 cups

For best results: Store covered in airtight container in refrigerator or freezer. Do not press down. Let mix come to room temperature before use. If using margarine, do not choose diet, whipped or soft

For recipes using the **1001 Cookie Starter** and more holiday fun, visit **dominosugar.com/holidays**

HELP US GET TO 1001 RECIPES
using the *1001 Cookie Starter*
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the Real Way to do Sweet!™

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Here's to You, Cheers to You

When **friends, family or guests** drop by, here are fun holiday drinks you can pull together **in a hurry**.

Raspberry Hot Cocoa

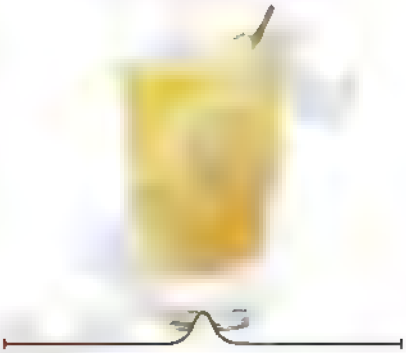
Heat 3 cups **2% milk** in a small saucepan over medium heat until bubbles form around sides of pan (do not boil). Place 1 cup thawed, frozen unsweetened **raspberries**, 6 oz. chopped **semisweet chocolate** and 2 tsp. **sugar** in a blender; cover. While processing, gradually add hot milk in a steady stream. Strain; discard seeds. Serve warm. *Makes 4 servings.*

—**ANDREW MCDOWELL**
LAKE VILLA, ILLINOIS

Butterscotch Martinis

Fill a shaker three-fourths full with **ice**. Add ¼ cup each **clear creme de cacao** and **creme de cacao** and 3 Tbsp. each **vodka** and **butterscotch schnapps liqueur**. Cover and shake. Divide 6 semisweet **chocolate chips** between two chilled cocktail glasses; strain butterscotch mixture over chips. *Makes 2 servings.*

—**CLARA COULSON MINNEY**
WASHINGTON COURT HOUSE, OHIO



Ginger Pear Sipper

In a tall glass, combine 3 oz. each chilled **ginger ale** and **pear nectar**; garnish with a **pear slice**. *Makes 1 serving.*

—**SUSAN WESTERFIELD**
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Cranberry-Lime Sangria

Cook 2 cups **water** with 1 cup fresh or frozen **cranberries** over medium heat until berries pop, about 5 minutes. Drain and discard liquid. Combine 1 bottle (750 mL) chilled **white wine** and ¾ cup thawed, frozen **limeade concentrate**. Stir in one each peeled and diced **apple**, **orange** and **lime**, and reserved cranberries; add 1 liter chilled **citrus soda**. Serve over ice. *Makes 13 servings.* —**KATY JOOSTEN**
LITTLE CHUTE, WISCONSIN

After-Dinner Mocha White Chocolate

Heat 1½ cups **2% milk** over medium heat until bubbles form around sides of pan (do not boil). Place 3 oz. chopped **white baking chocolate**, 2 Tbsp. **instant coffee granules** and 1 tsp. **vanilla extract** in a blender. Add hot milk; cover and process until frothy. Serve in mugs. Garnish with **whipped cream** and **baking cocoa** if desired. *Makes 2 servings.*

—**JANET ELROD** NEWNAN, GEORGIA

Sparkling Pom-Berry Splash

Pour 2 oz. chilled **pomegranate blueberry juice** and 1 tsp. **lime juice** into a champagne flute; top with ⅓ cup chilled **sparkling moscato wine**. *Makes 1 serving.*

—**SHIRLEY WARREN**
THIENSVILLE, WISCONSIN

Citrus Champagne Sparkler

Combine 1¼ cups **orange juice** and ⅓ cup each **orange liqueur** and **brandy**. Stir in ¼ cup each **sugar**, **lemon juice** and **pineapple juice**. Pour ¼ cup mixture into each champagne flute. Top with **Champagne**. *Makes 11 servings.* —**SHARON TIPTON**
WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA

Frosty Pumpkin Nog

In a blender, combine 3 cups **2% milk**, ⅔ cup low-fat **vanilla frozen yogurt**, ½ cup **canned pumpkin** and ¼ cup **sugar**. Add 1 tsp. each ground **nutmeg**, **cinnamon** and **mace**; cover and process for 30 seconds or until smooth. Pour into chilled glasses; garnish with **whipped cream** if desired. Serve immediately. *Makes 5 servings.*
—**CRYSTAL JO BRUNS** ILIFF, COLORADO FE

Creamy Peppermint Punch

Prepare glasses as described above. Blend ½ gallon **peppermint ice cream**, 1 bottle (1 liter) chilled **club soda** and 4 cups **eggnog** in a 4-qt. punch bowl. Serve immediately.
Makes 16 ¾-cup servings.
—**LINDA FOREMAN**
LOCUST GROVE, OKLAHOMA FE

Mulled Red Cider

In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine 1¾ cups **apple cider**, ½ cup **sugar**, 3 **cinnamon sticks** and 4 **whole cloves**; cook until sugar is dissolved. Add 1 bottle (750 mL) **dry red wine** and heat through. Remove from the heat. Cover and steep for 10 minutes; strain. Serve warm in cinnamon-sugar-garnished mugs.
Makes 7 ¾-cup servings. —**STEVE FOY**
KIRKWOOD, MISSOURI ■

Dress Your Drink

When it comes to holiday beverages, garnishes are half the fun. Here are some celebratory ideas to get you started.

- Add extra yum to chocolaty drinks by dipping rims of glasses into Irish cream or water and then into powdered hot chocolate.
- Use this same technique to create the look of snow-tipped glasses. Just dip the rims into water, then superfine sugar.
- You can also rim drinks with very finely crushed graham crackers, cookies or candies.
- Use edible drink stirrers, such as rock candy sticks, candy canes or red licorice sticks.
- Flavor and chill drinks with ice cubes made from juice, brewed tea or water mixed with chunks of fruit.

- Add art with stencils. Use Wilton's Cupcake & Cookie Stencils to give seasonal shapes to powdered sugar, cocoa powder or edible glitter sprinkled on top of a drink. Holiday Cupcake & Cookie Stencils, **wilton.com**. *$2*
- Top off drinks with whipped cream that provides an unexpected kick of flavor and a tiny bit of booze. We like Whipped Lightning, available in 11 flavors ranging from Pumpkin Pie to Tropical Passion. It jazzes up hot or frozen beverages and most desserts. To find Whipped Lightning at a store near you, visit **whippedlightning.com**. *$7-10*

MORE ONLINE
For more holiday drink ideas, visit **tasteofhome.com/holidaydrinks**

Use the broth cooks trust most.
Because this meal doesn't come with a do-over.

MOIST AND SAVORY STUFFING

Prep: 10 min. Cook: 10 min. Bake: 30 min. Serves: 10

2½ cups *Swanson*® Chicken Broth (Regular, *Natural Goodness*® or Certified Organic)
Generous dash ground black pepper
2 stalks celery, coarsely chopped
1 large onion, coarsely chopped
1 pkg. (14 oz.) *Pepperidge Farm*® Herb Seasoned Stuffing

1. Heat broth, black pepper, celery and onion in 3-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Cover and cook 5 min. or until vegetables are tender. Add stuffing and mix lightly.
2. Spoon stuffing mixture into greased 3-qt. shallow baking dish. Cover baking dish.
3. Bake at 350°F 30 min. or until stuffing mixture is hot.

Tip: For crunchier stuffing, bake stuffing uncovered.

The secret is SWANSON

CampbellsKitchen.com/SwansonBroth

Down-Home & Delicious

Cozy up **any day of the week** to these meals starring **soup, pasta, beef brisket and more.** Best of all, they're easy on you, the cook.

Creamy and Dreamy
Kick Old Man Winter in the shins with a soul-warming soup that cooks in less than 30 minutes.

Baked Potato Cheddar Soup

Use good extra-sharp cheddar (such as English) for a fuller taste.
—**KRISTIN REYNOLDS** VAN BUREN, ARKANSAS

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN.
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups milk
- 2 large potatoes, baked, peeled and coarsely mashed (1½ lbs.)
- ⅓ cup plus 2 Tbsp. shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup thinly sliced green onions, divided
- Crumbled cooked bacon, optional

1. In a large saucepan, whisk flour and milk until smooth. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the potatoes, ⅓ cup cheese, salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat for 2-3 minutes.
2. Remove from heat. Stir in sour cream and ¼ cup onions. Cover; cook over medium heat for 10-12 minutes (do not boil). Garnish with remaining cheese, onions and bacon if desired.

ON THE SIDE

Prosciutto Provolone Panini

On four slices of **white bread**, layer a slice of **provolone cheese**, a slice of **prosciutto** and a second slice of provolone. Top with a slice of bread. Brush both sides of sandwiches with 3 Tbsp. **olive oil**, sprinkle with 3 Tbsp. minced **fresh sage**. Cook in a panini maker or indoor grill until toasted and melted. *Makes 4 servings.*
—**CANDY SUMMERHILL** ALEXANDER, ARKANSAS

Chicken Caesar Florentine

turned my favor te chicken Caesar sa ad recipe on its head by stuffing the greens m xture into bone-in chicken breasts Once they're in the oven, you m'ght even find a few moments to re ax before dinner.
—**JOYCE CONWAY** WESTERVILLE, OHIO

PREP: 15 M N. • **BAKE:** 40 M N
YIELD: 4 SERV NGS

- **2 cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided**
- **2 cups Caesar salad croutons, coarsely crushed, divided**
- **1 cup fresh baby spinach**
- **1 cup creamy Caesar salad dressing, divided**
- **4 bone-in chicken breast halves, skin removed (8 oz. each)**

1. In a large bowl, combine 1 cup cheese, 1 cup crushed croutons, spinach and ½ cup salad dressing. Cut a pocket in the thickest part of each chicken breast; fill with cheese mixture.
2. Place remaining dressing and crushed croutons in separate shallow bowls. Dip chicken in dressing, then roll in croutons.
3. Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9 in. baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese; bake 10-15 minutes longer or until a meat thermometer reads 170°.

ON THE SIDE
Sweet-Sour Green Beans

Cook 4 cups cut fresh **green beans** in boiling water for 8-10 minutes or until crisp-tender. Cook 4 chopped **bacon** strips over medium heat until crisp. Using a slotted spoon, remove to paper towels. Drain, reserving 4 tsp. drippings; saute ½ cup chopped **onion** in the drippings. Stir in 2 Tbsp. each **brown sugar** and **vinegar**; heat through. Stir in cooked green beans and bacon. ***Makes 4 servings.***
—**CLAIRE MOSER** MIDDLETOWN, MARYLAND

Rosemary-Apricot Pork Tenderloin

You'll be surprised at how quick y th s d sh comes together With little effort, you'll have tender, juicy tenderloin that begs to be added to a salad or sandw ch the next day
—**MARIE RIZZIO** INTERLOCHEN, MICH GAN

PREP: 15 M N. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN
YIELD: 8 SERV NGS

- **3 Tbsp. minced fresh rosemary or 1 Tbsp. dried rosemary, crushed**
- **3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided**
- **4 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **½ tsp. pepper**
- **2 pork tenderloins (1 lb. each)**

GLAZE

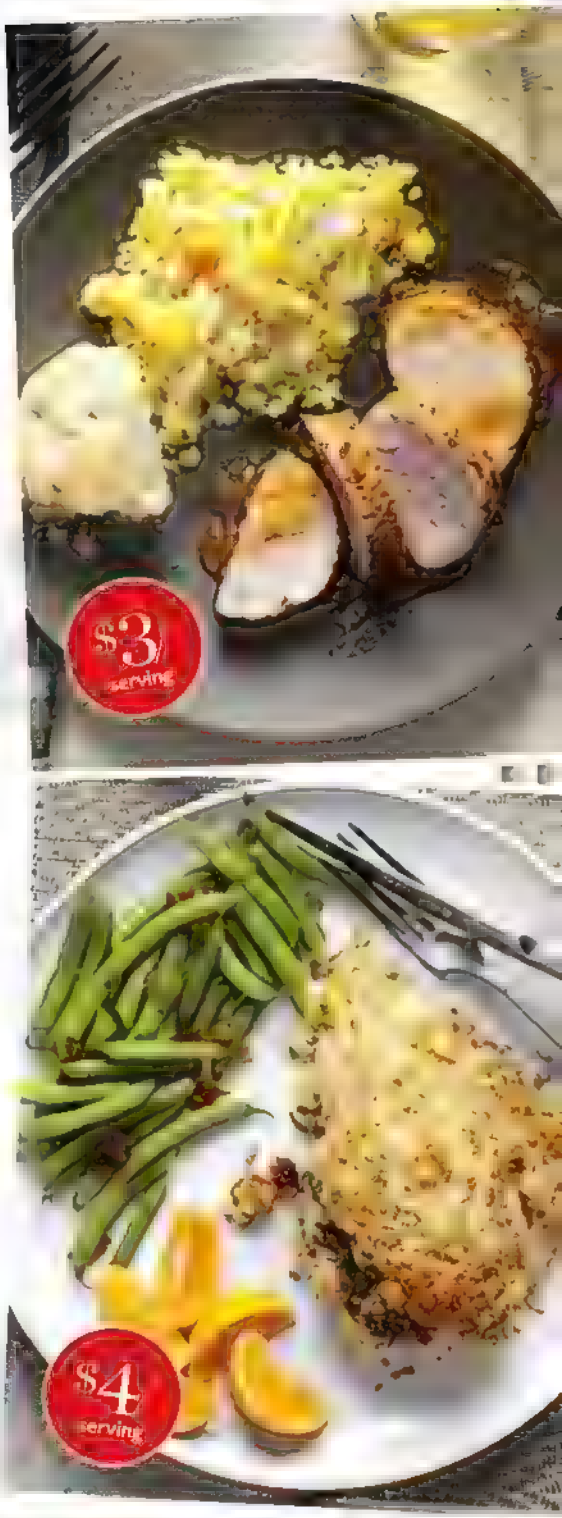
- **1 cup apricot preserves**
- **3 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**

1. In a small bowl, combine the rosemary, 1 Tbsp. oil, garlic, salt and pepper; brush over pork.
2. In a large ovenproof skillet, brown pork in remaining oil on all sides. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes.
3. In a small bowl, combine the glaze ingredients; brush over pork. Bake 10-15 minutes longer or until a meat thermometer reads 160°, basting occasionally with pan juices. Let stand for 5 minutes before slicing.

ON THE SIDE
Curried Apricot Couscous

Saute ⅓ cup chopped **onion** in 3 Tbsp. butter in a small saucepan. Stir in 1½ cups **chicken broth**, 1 cup chopped **dried apricots** and ¼ tsp. **curry powder**. Bring to a boil. Stir in 1 cup uncooked **couscous**. Cover and remove from the heat; let stand for 5-10 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with a fork. ***Makes 5 servings.***
—**JESSICA GRETTIE** DEERF ELD, WISCONSIN

▼ **Rosemary-Apricot Pork Tenderloin, Curried Apricot Couscous**



▲ **Chicken Caesar Florentine, Sweet-Sour Green Beans**

Pulled Brisket Sandwiches

Slow cooker to the rescue. Turn a beef brisket into a tender meal without fuss.

—**JANE GUILBEAU** BROUSSARD, LOUISIANA

PREP: 25 MIN. • **COOK:** 8 HOURS
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- **1 fresh beef brisket (4 to 5 lbs.)**
- **1½ cups water**
- **½ cup Worcestershire sauce**
- **2 Tbsp. cider vinegar**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1½ tsp. beef bouillon granules**
- **1½ tsp. chili powder**
- **1 tsp. ground mustard**
- **½ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **¼ tsp. garlic salt**
- **½ cup ketchup**
- **2 Tbsp. brown sugar**
- **2 Tbsp. butter**
- **½ tsp. hot pepper sauce**
- **12 kaiser rolls, split**

1. Cut brisket in half; place in a 5-qt. slow cooker. In a small bowl, combine the water, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, garlic, bouillon, chili powder, mustard, cayenne and garlic salt. Cover and refrigerate ½ cup mixture for sauce; pour remaining mixture over beef. Cover and cook on low for 8-10 hours or until meat is tender.
2. Remove beef; cool slightly. Skim fat from cooking juices. Shred meat with two forks and return to the slow cooker; heat through.
3. In a small saucepan, combine the ketchup, brown sugar, butter, pepper sauce and reserved water mixture. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 2-3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, place beef on rolls; drizzle with sauce.

Editor's Note: *This is a fresh beef brisket, not corned beef.*

ON THE SIDE
Zippy Tortilla Chips

Combine 1½ tsp. **brown sugar** with ¾ tsp. each **garlic powder**, **onion powder**, **ground cumin** and **paprika**. Season with ½ tsp. **cayenne pepper**. Stack 12 **corn tortillas**; cut into six wedges. Arrange in a single layer on baking sheets coated with **cooking spray**. Spritz wedges with cooking spray; sprinkle with seasoning mixture. Bake at 375° for 9-10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool for 5 minutes. *Makes 6 servings.*

—**KIM SUMRALL** APTOS, CALIFORNIA

Peas and Pasta Carbonara

Speed through this dish with the help of a tasty, super-simple sauce.

—**CELESTE BRANTOLINO** LENOIR, NORTH CAROLINA

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN.
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- **1 pkg. (16 oz.) fettuccine**
- **2 cups frozen peas**
- **2 Tbsp. butter**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1½ cups 2% milk**
- **1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, cubed**
- **4 oz. thinly sliced prosciutto or deli ham, cut into thin strips**
- **½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **Coarsely ground pepper**

1. In a Dutch oven, cook fettuccine according to package directions, adding the peas during the last 3 minutes of cooking.
2. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic; cook 1 minute. Add milk and cream cheese, cook and stir until blended. Remove from the heat; stir in prosciutto and Parmesan cheese.
3. Drain fettuccine and peas; toss with sauce. Sprinkle with pepper.

ON THE SIDE
Roasted Grape Tomatoes

Whisk ½ cup **cider vinegar**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, 2 Tbsp. **oil** and 4 minced **garlic cloves**; add 1 lb. **grape tomatoes**. Season with **salt** and **pepper**; toss to coat. Transfer to a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. minced **fresh parsley**. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 12-14 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. *Makes 4 cups.*

—**LINDA GREEN** ARDMORE, OKLAHOMA

▼ **Pulled Brisket Sandwiches, Zippy Tortilla Chips, Sweet-Sour Green Beans** **(recipe, *page 51*)**

▲ **Peas and Pasta Carbonara, Roasted Grape Tomatoes**

Easy Meals for Busy Families
Make weeknight dinners hassle-free with *Simple & Delicious*, our sister magazine! Each issue includes a mix of last-minute menu ideas, plan-ahead meals and goof-proof tips. For a free trial issue, visit **tasteofhome.com/freesimple**.

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Pots of Perfection

Eating light is easy when dinner is this delicious. | BY KAREN DAVIS

No matter the season, our *Taste of Home* Cooking School audiences always want to learn about meals that are family-pleasing, satisfying and lighter than expected. Once winter sets in, they tack "cozy" onto the list. That's where this recipe comes in. It's a perfect warm-up-the-family meal that doesn't demand too much time or throw off your healthy-eating plans. This meal-in-a-dish even offers easy cleanup.

Makeover Chicken Potpies

Feel-good ingredients such as peas, carrots, onions and celery make it even more tempting to dive into this slimmed-down but hearty potpie on brisk winter days.
—**JOHN SLIVON** NAVARRE BEACH, FLORIDA

PREP: 30 MIN. + CHILLING • **BAKE:** 20 MIN.
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- **1 cup plus 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour, divided**
- **¼ tsp. baking powder**
- **¼ tsp. salt**
- **3 Tbsp. cold butter, divided**
- **2 Tbsp. buttermilk**
- **1 Tbsp. canola oil**
- **1 to 2 Tbsp. cold water**
- **4 medium carrots, sliced**
- **3 celery ribs, sliced**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **2½ cups reduced-sodium chicken broth**
- **⅔ cup fat-free milk**
- **2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast**
- **1 cup frozen peas**
- **⅛ tsp. pepper**
- **1 egg white, lightly beaten**

1. In a small bowl, combine ¾ cup flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in 2 Tbsp. butter until crumbly. Add buttermilk and oil; toss with a fork. Gradually add water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.
2. For filling, in a large skillet, melt remaining butter. Add the carrots, celery and onion; saute until crisp-tender. In a small bowl, combine remaining flour with the broth and milk until smooth. Gradually stir into vegetable mixture. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the chicken, peas and pepper. Transfer to four 16-oz. ramekins; set aside.
3. Divide dough into four portions. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to fit ramekins. Place dough over chicken mixture; trim and seal edges. Cut out a decorative center or cut slits in pastry. Brush with egg white.
4. Place ramekins on a baking sheet. Bake at 425° for 20-25 minutes or until crusts are golden brown. ■

Potpie Primer

- If you don't have buttermilk, use plain yogurt instead.
- Keep your butter cold. This creates little pockets that contain steam when baking, resulting in a flakier crust.
- If you plan to freeze your potpies for later, be sure to fully bake and cool them first. Then seal tightly in plastic wrap and a freezer-safe bag before putting them in the freezer.
- Toss in extra veggies if you have them. The more, the merrier!
- In addition to cutting fun shapes into your crust, try topping with a nice fresh herb before baking. A little fresh thyme is wonderful.

Karen Davis is a *Taste of Home* Cooking School culinary specialist. She presents shows in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. See tasteofhome.com/cooking-schools.

Sweetly Slim and Trim

Some things you have to accept: **Dieting during the holidays is as likely as finding a primo parking spot at the mall.** So don't try. Just choose wisely whenever you can, such as with these lightened-up desserts that **cater to cravings** while **weighing lightly on waistlines.**

Add More Flavor Fat tastes good. *Duh,* right? So compensate for its absence in reduced-fat baking by adding bold spices and flavors. Coffee, for example, intensifies chocolate's chocolatyness.

Chocolate-Pumpkin Cheesecake Bars

Almond Torte

Think Fast Reduced-fat baked goods bake more quickly than those with full fat. Check for doneness on the early side of baking time.

Chocolate-Pumpkin Cheesecake Bars

I added a flavor boost to my favorite cheesecake brownies by stirring in pumpkin and spices. The pumpkin and reduced-fat cream cheese keep these bars moist.
—**JUDY CASTRANOVA** NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA

PREP: 30 MIN • **BAKE:** 20 MIN
YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- ⅓ cup butter, cubed
- 1½ oz. unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. instant coffee granules
- ½ cup boiling water
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups sugar
- ¾ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt

CHEESECAKE BATTER

- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) reduced-fat cream cheese
- ½ cup canned pumpkin
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¾ tsp. ground ginger
- ⅛ tsp. ground cloves
- 1 egg
- 1 cup (6 oz.) semisweet chocolate chips

1. In a microwave oven, melt butter and chocolate; stir until smooth. Cool slightly.
2. In a large bowl, dissolve coffee in water. Stir in the pumpkin, eggs and chocolate mixture. Combine the flour, sugar, baking soda and salt; gradually add to chocolate mixture. Transfer to a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan coated with cooking spray.
3. For cheesecake batter, in a small bowl, beat cream cheese and pumpkin until smooth. Beat in the sugar, vanilla and spices. Add egg; beat on low speed just until combined. Spoon over chocolate batter. Cut through batter with a knife to swirl the cheesecake portion. Sprinkle with chocolate chips.
4. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out with moist crumbs (do not overbake). Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Nutrition Facts: *1 bar equals 197 calories, 8 g fat (5 g saturated fat), 40 mg cholesterol, 157 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g protein.*
Diabetic Exchanges: *2 starch, 1 fat.*

Pecan Bread Pudding with Rum Custard Sauce

Almond Torte

Reduced-fat sour cream, egg whites and applesauce lighten up this gorgeous torte. A creamy custard filling lends richness.
—**KATHY OLSEN** MARLBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

PREP: 45 MIN. + CHILLING • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 16 SERVINGS

- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- ½ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. almond extract

CAKE

- 4 egg whites
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups sugar, divided
- 2 egg yolks
- ⅓ cup fat-free milk
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ½ cup sliced almonds
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon

1. In a double boiler or metal bowl over simmering water, constantly whisk the sugar, cornstarch, sour cream and egg yolks until mixture reaches 160° or is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
2. Remove from the heat; stir in butter and extracts until blended. Press waxed paper onto surface of custard. Refrigerate for several hours or overnight.
3. Place egg whites in a large bowl; let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Line two 8-in. round baking pans with waxed paper. Coat sides and paper with cooking spray; sprinkle with flour and set aside.
4. In a large bowl, beat butter and ½ cup sugar until blended, about 2 minutes. Add egg yolks; mix well. Beat in the milk, applesauce and vanilla (mixture may appear curdled). Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; add to butter mixture. Transfer to prepared pans, set aside.
5. Using clean beaters, beat egg whites on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually beat in remaining sugar, 2 Tbsp. at a time, on high until stiff glossy peaks form and sugar is dissolved. Spread evenly over batter; sprinkle with almonds and cinnamon.
6. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until meringue is lightly browned. Cool in pans on wire racks for 10 minutes (meringue will crack). Loosen edges of cakes from pans with a knife. Using two large spatulas, carefully remove one cake to a serving plate, meringue side up; remove remaining cake to a wire rack, meringue side up. Cool cakes completely.
7. Carefully spread custard over cake on serving plate; top with remaining cake. Store in the refrigerator.

Nutrition Facts: *1 slice equals 215 calories, 8 g fat (4 g saturated fat), 79 mg cholesterol, 99 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 4 g protein.*
Diabetic Exchanges: *2 starch, 1 fat.*

Be A Good Egg
Baking with egg whites or egg substitute can reduce fat and cholesterol.

Pecan Bread Pudding with Rum Custard Sauce

Fat-free ingredients, though not suitable for all baking recipes, work like a charm in this homey dessert.
—**VIRGINIA ANTHONY** JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

PREP: 25 MIN. + STANDING • **BAKE:** 30 MIN. **YIELD:** 6 SERVINGS (1½ CUPS SAUCE)

- ¾ cup fat-free milk
- ¾ cup fat-free evaporated milk
- ½ cup egg substitute
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 4 cups cubed day-old French bread
- ⅓ cup chopped pecans, toasted

RUM CUSTARD SAUCE

- ¼ cup sugar
- 4 tsp. cornstarch
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ½ cup fat-free milk
- ½ cup fat-free evaporated milk
- 2 Tbsp. egg substitute
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. rum or ½ tsp. rum extract
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract
- ⅛ tsp. butter flavoring

1. In a large bowl, whisk the first eight ingredients. Gently stir in bread and pecans; let stand for 10 minutes or until bread is softened.
2. Transfer to an 8-in. square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.
3. For sauce, combine the sugar, cornstarch and salt in a small heavy saucepan. Stir in milk and evaporated milk until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer.
4. Remove from the heat. Whisk a small amount of the hot mixture into the egg substitute; return all to the pan, whisking constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Serve warm with bread pudding. Refrigerate leftovers.

Nutrition Facts: *¾ cup pudding with ¼ cup sauce equals 286 calories, 8 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 8 mg cholesterol, 455 mg sodium, 43 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 11 g protein.* ■

Health Briefs

News to **peruse** for a better life | BY SARA ALTSHUL

YOU SAY YOU WANT A RESOLUTION...

The key to reaching your goals is to meet life's many changes with flexibility, says motivational psychologist Jim Taylor, Ph.D., an adjunct professor at the University of San Francisco. His advice? Practice persistence, perseverance and patience when change thwarts your resolve. If you're like most people and hope to lose weight (the No. 1 resolution, according to a survey by Wakefield Research for MorningStar Farms), channeling these three P's is paramount to staying on track, says Taylor. That means always moving toward your goals despite any setbacks. Setting mini targets and treating yourself to mini (or many) rewards along the way helps, too.

Cold-killing HOT TODDIES

Granny was right: Hot toddies really can ward off a cold or flu, says Martha Howard, medical director of Wellness Associates in Chicago. Brew up a potent virus fighter by simply stirring the juice of a lemon and honey to taste into a mugful of boiling water. Then add 2 teaspoons of elderberry syrup (available in health food stores—try Nature's Way Sambucus Original Syrup). The toddy's hot steam and liquid help clear your head, the lemon clears mucus and gives you some vitamin C, and the antiviral, antibacterial honey also soothes your throat. Elderberry syrup is a proven treatment for flu and colds: In studies, it shortens recovery time by up to four days. If you like your toddies a bit more spirited, add just a jigger of whiskey, rum, bourbon or brandy a few hours before bedtime. The alcohol acts as a mild sedative and may even help you sweat out the cold, says Howard.

Blueberries Battle Cancer

A cup of blueberries a day can help prevent the cell damage linked to cancer, say researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Comprehensive Cancer Center. Frozen berries are just as protective (and yummy) as fresh ones, says study author Laura Newton, associate professor in UAB's Department of Nutrition Sciences. Blueberries are packed with cancer-preventing compounds, including antioxidants and flavonoids, and vitamin C, which can strengthen your immune system and blood vessels, says Newton. Make a smoothie with a cup of frozen blueberries, unsweetened yogurt or kefir, and a dash of honey, maple syrup or agave nectar for sweetness.

Resolve to Eat More Pistachios

Fill your nut bowl with pistachios in the shell, and treat yourself and your holiday guests to some waistline-friendlier snacking. Three recent studies revealed happy news about this tasty nut.

1. Choose pistachios with shells instead of those without shells and you'll consume 41 percent fewer calories. Shelling the nuts slows your consumption, and seeing the pile of empty shells curbs overeating, says study author James Painter, chair of the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University.
2. The fat in pistachios may not be completely absorbed by your body, which means that the nuts may contain fewer calories per serving than once thought, according to information recently published by the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA.
3. Eating pistachios and other nuts—along with veggies, whole grains, fruits and yogurt—is linked to weight loss, according to data released by Harvard University researchers. ■

PHOTOS: MARTIN LEIGH/OXFORD SCIENTIFIC/GETTY IMAGES (TEA); VALENTYNA7/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (BLUEBERRIES); NORMAN CHAN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (PISTACHIOS)

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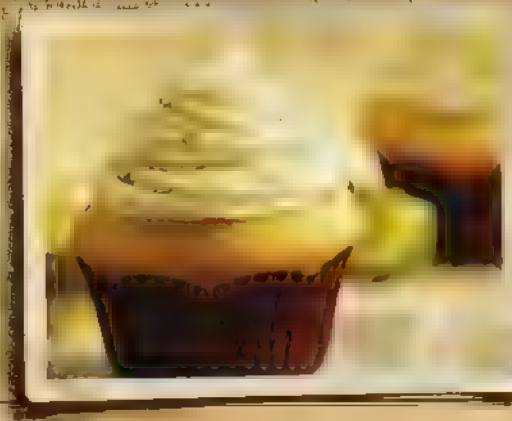

EVERY MADAGASCAR

VANILLA FLOWER

MUST BE HAND POLLINATED ON THE VERY DAY IT BLOOMS.

Then things get really tricky.

It's not easy to produce the world's most flavorful vanilla. The beans are grown in the rainforests of Madagascar, picked by hand, then patiently cured for months to develop the full, mellow flavor. Some vanillas use less flavorful beans or add corn syrup. We think that's a shame. After all, you don't compromise your recipes, why should we? Spice Islands 100% pure vanilla extract is just one of our exceptional flavors. Learn more at spiceislands.com.

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contest

The Sweet Touch

A homemade gift, created in the kitchen **and presented prettily**, is truly a joy to give or receive. From snack mixes to candies to mini Bundt cakes and more, these **homemade treasures** deliver a taste of the holidays. Cheerful **DIY packaging ideas** add another touch of thoughtfulness to the treats.

Two Gifts in One
Tart-sweet cranberry sauce gets dolled up quick in a vintage-style dish towel.

Bow-dacious
Add glitz to boxed mixes by embellishing with a big, cheery bow.

Glam It Up
Colorful tins hide little surprises of homemade candy or mini cakes.

Something to Savor
A spiced-up curry snack mix takes minutes to make and is just as simple to adorn.

BECOME A COOKING LEGEND! TURN THE PAGE TO ENTER OUR NEXT CONTEST.

MERRIEST OF TREATS

ENTER OUR **HOLIDAY DESSERTS** CONTEST & WIN

$500

DO YOU CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH THE BEST IN COOKIES, CAKES AND PIES? If your recipe box boasts the grandest finales to holiday meals, now's the time to show them off. We're searching for showstopping Holiday Desserts that earn top marks with friends and family.

Send us the treats that others eagerly await, the goodies you most look forward to making. You could win $500 and a chance to bask in the *Taste of Home* spotlight.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR HOLIDAY DESSERT RECIPES THAT IMPRESS IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

Cookies & Bars Embrace or embellish classics, or share your own top-notch creations. Make them simple and delicious, or fanciful delights for the senses.

Bread Pudding Show off your prowess with stellar sweets based on breads, croissants or similar baked goods. Follow your heart and go rich, creamy and decadent, or surprisingly light and fruity.

Cakes Use your imagination to combine tender layers with luscious fillings and toppings. Impress us with tried-and-true basics, 13- by 9-inch wonders, stunning towers or perfectly matched cake-and-frosting combos.

Candies The sky's the limit when it comes to flavors and shapes. Think brittles, chocolates, chewy delights or hard candies with your own unique variation.

Cobblers Get creative with fruit blends, batters, biscuits and spices. Whether pulled from the stove or popped from the skillet, share your great new take on this all-American treat.

Tarts & Pies Go wild with fillings, from creams and fruits to chocolates and puddings. Have a field day with crusts, whether they're traditionally flaky or cookie-, graham cracker- or nut-based. Skip the topping, or add mile-high meringue, whipped cream, candy or anything else your heart desires.

ENTRY DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 29, 2012. Winners and runners-up will be announced in the December/January 2013 issue.

ENTER TODAY AT **tasteofhome.com/recipecontests.**

Meet This Issue's *Grand Prize* Winner

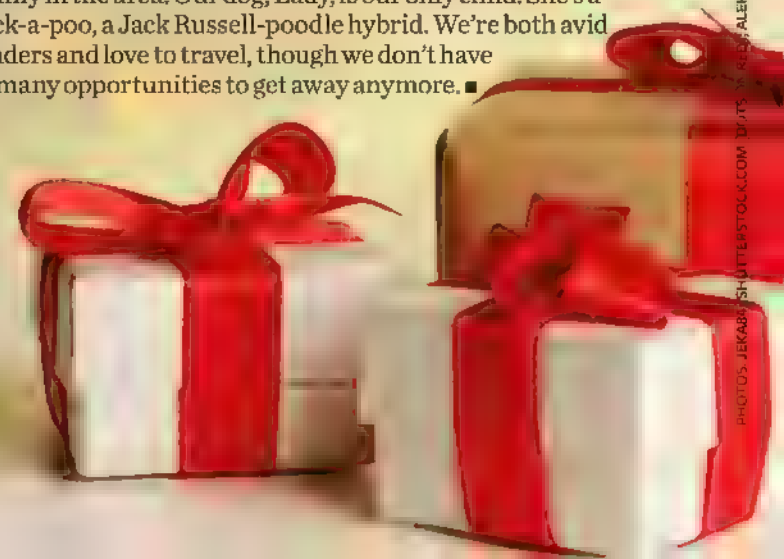
Nothing puts the **happy in holidays like homemade caramels**, and contest winner Sharon Delaney-Chronis of South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has perfected the practice.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND YOUR MACADAMIA AND COCONUT CARAMELS?
Originally this recipe belonged to my great grandmother. She never used exact measurements, so I've spent several years playing with and perfecting my version. I make these for every holiday and family gathering.

ANY SPECIAL TRICKS OR TIPS TO MAKING THEM?
While it's a basic caramel recipe, I don't recommend changing the ingredients much. When cooking, watch the mixture closely so you don't burn it—I've set off our smoke alarms quite a few times! The one thing you can change is what you mix into the caramel. Make them your own by adding just about anything you like, such as chopped nuts, dried fruit, chocolate chips or sprinkles.

DESCRIBE WHAT DINING IS LIKE AT YOUR HOUSE.
I have several shelves in my kitchen devoted to cookbooks. I also have quite a few binders of favorite recipes I've found online and in magazines. I cook every day for my husband and myself. We'll both eat just about anything, which is great for testing all the recipes in my ever-growing collection! I've always wanted to open a shop that sold only appetizers and fun snacks. They're not only my favorite to cook, they're my favorite to eat!

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.
My husband, Jim, is a retired technical writer and Army veteran. We've lived in Milwaukee for a long time and have family in the area. Our dog, Lady, is our only child. She's a Jack-a-poo, a Jack Russell-poodle hybrid. We're both avid readers and love to travel, though we don't have as many opportunities to get away anymore. ■



PHOTOS: JEKABS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; DJTS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; ALEKSANDRA ZAITSEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (G FTS)

GRAND PRIZE

Macadamia & Coconut Caramels

SHARON DELANEY-CHRONIS SOUTH MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Individually wrapped in waxed paper, these chewy bites make sweet gifts. Add them to a cookie tin lined with tissue paper. Tie with a wide satin ribbon and personalize with a sparkly initial made by brushing glue and sprinkling glitter on a wooden letter.

FIRST PLACE

Great Granola

JOHNNA JOHNSON SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

Granola goes glam when stowed in a see-through container decked out with tinsel. Nuts, dried fruit and more make a crunchy mix for topping oatmeal or eating by the handful. Tie on mini holiday bulbs fancied up with a metallic paint pen.

SECOND PLACE

Triple-Ginger Gingersnaps

JESS FOLLEN WAUNAKEE, WISCONSIN

Ginger cookies are holiday hits. Tuck them into clean, recycled coffee cans wrapped in decorative paper. With a glue gun, add ribbon or trim.

THIRD PLACE

Gingerbread Spice Jelly

ROBIN NAGEL WHITEHALL, MONTANA

Spread good tidings with aromatic preserves. Adorn lids with small paper doilies and snowflake stickers and tie on gingerbread man cookie cutters backed with cheery paper. Don't forget the recipe!

Great Granola

PREP: 25 MIN • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 7 CUPS

- **2 cups old-fashioned oats**
- **½ cup chopped almonds**
- **½ cup salted pumpkin seeds or pepitas**
- **½ cup chopped walnuts**
- **¼ cup chopped pecans**
- **¼ cup sesame seeds**
- **¼ cup sunflower kernels**
- **⅓ cup honey**
- **¼ cup packed brown sugar**
- **¼ cup maple syrup**
- **2 Tbsp. toasted wheat germ**
- **2 Tbsp. canola oil**
- **1 tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1 pkg. (7 oz.) dried fruit bits**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first seven ingredients; set aside.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the honey, brown sugar, syrup, wheat germ, oil and cinnamon. Cook and stir over medium heat for 4-5 minutes or until smooth. Remove from the heat; stir in vanilla. Pour over the oat mixture and toss to coat.
3. Transfer to a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 22-27 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Cool completely on a wire rack. Stir in fruit bits. Store granola in an airtight container.

Macadamia & Coconut Caramels

PREP: 25 MIN. • **COOK:** 25 MIN. + CHILLING • **YIELD:** 1½ LBS

- **1 tsp. plus ½ cup butter, divided**
- **1 cup packed light brown sugar**
- **½ cup light corn syrup**
- **¼ tsp. cream of tartar**
- **¾ cup sweetened condensed milk**
- **½ cup flaked coconut**
- **½ cup chopped macadamia nuts**
- **½ tsp. vanilla extract**

1. Line an 8-in. square baking dish with foil and grease the foil with 1 tsp. butter; set aside.
2. In a large heavy saucepan, combine the brown sugar, corn syrup, cream of tartar and remaining butter; bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat; gradually stir in milk. Cook and stir over medium-low heat until a candy thermometer reads 244° (firm ball stage).
3. Remove from the heat; stir in remaining ingredients. Pour into prepared dish. Refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours.
4. Using foil, lift candy out of dish. Gently peel off foil; cut caramel into 1-in. squares. Wrap individually in waxed paper; twist ends. Store in an airtight container.
Editor's Note: *We recommend that you test your candy thermometer before each use by bringing water to a boil; the thermometer should read 212°. Adjust your recipe temperature up or down based on your test.*

Gingerbread Spice Jelly

PREP: 15 MIN. + STANDING • **PROCESS:** 10 MIN. • **YIELD:** 5 HALF-PINTS

- **2½ cups water**
- **18 individual gingerbread spice tea bags**
- **4½ cups sugar**
- **½ cup unsweetened apple juice**
- **2 tsp. butter**
- **2 pouches (3 oz. each) liquid fruit pectin**

1. In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil. Remove from the heat; add tea bags. Cover and steep for 30 minutes.
2. Discard tea bags. Stir in the sugar, apple juice and butter. Bring to a full rolling boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in pectin. Boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly.
3. Remove from the heat; skim off foam. Carefully ladle hot mixture into hot half-pint jars, leaving ¼ in. headspace. Remove air bubbles; wipe rims and adjust lids. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling-water canner. (Jelly may take up to 2 weeks to fully set.)
Editor's Note: *The processing time listed is for altitudes of 1,000 feet or less. Add 1 minute to the processing time for each 1,000 feet of additional altitude.*

Triple-Ginger Gingersnaps

PREP: 35 MIN. + CHILLING • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH • **YIELD:** 4 DOZEN

- **⅔ cup butter, softened**
- **1 cup packed brown sugar**
- **¼ cup molasses**
- **1 egg**
- **2 tsp. minced fresh gingerroot**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **¾ cup whole wheat flour**
- **3 tsp. ground ginger**
- **1½ tsp. baking soda**
- **½ tsp. fine sea salt or kosher salt**
- **½ tsp. ground nutmeg**
- **¼ tsp. ground cloves**
- **3 Tbsp. crystallized ginger, finely chopped**
- **¼ cup sugar**
- **1½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **White candy coating, optional**
- **Colored sugar, optional**

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the molasses, egg and fresh ginger.
2. Combine the flours, ground ginger, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cloves; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in crystallized ginger. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or until easy to handle.
3. In a small bowl, combine sugar and cinnamon. Shape dough into 1-in. balls; roll in sugar mixture. Place 3 in. apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 10-12 minutes or until set. Cool for 2 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks. If desired, dip cooled cookies partway in melted white candy coating, place on waxed paper and sprinkle with colored sugar. Let stand until set. Store in an airtight container.

Curried Cranberry Snack Mix

ROBIN HAAS CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND

Pack this easy-to-make munchie in a sleek glass or acrylic canister adorned with cotton yarn, and it'll be ready to put under the tree. Get that candy-cane brightness by winding yarn in shades of red and pink around the canister before topping with a handmade pompom.

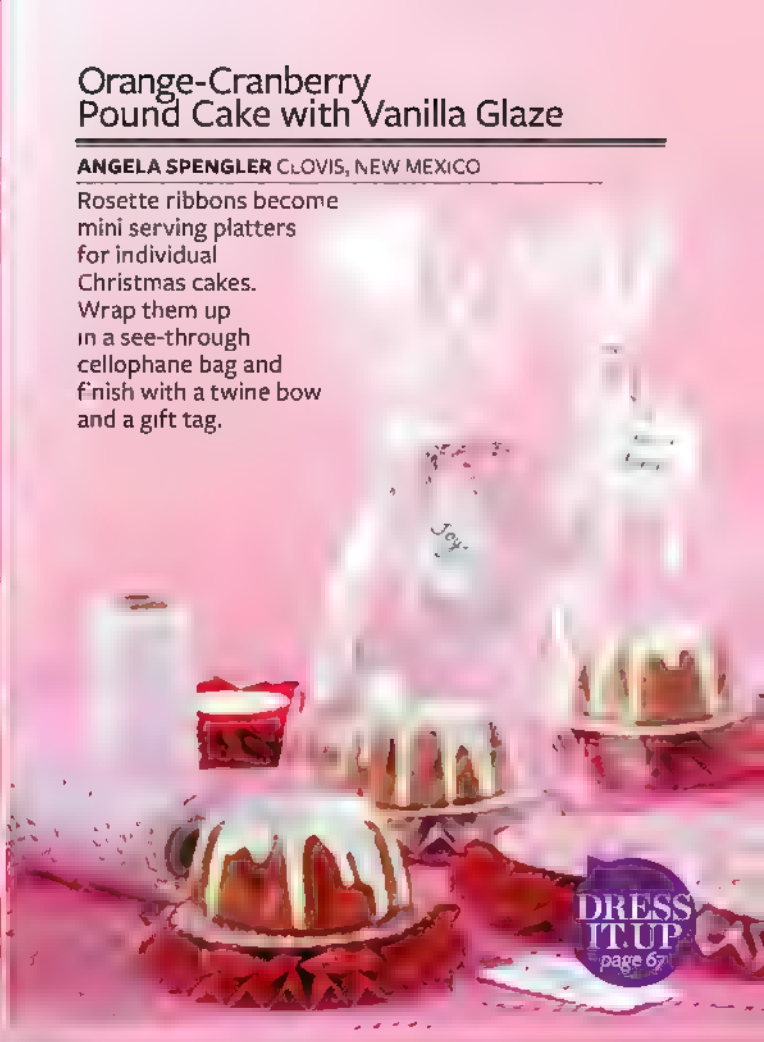
DRESS IT UP page 67

Orange-Cranberry Pound Cake with Vanilla Glaze

ANGELA SPENGLER CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO

Rosette ribbons become mini serving platters for individual Christmas cakes. Wrap them up in a see-through cellophane bag and finish with a twine bow and a gift tag.

DRESS IT UP page 67



Cognac Date Squares

LISA SPEER PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Cider, cognac and pistachios provide new flavor to a classic. Cut into squares and place in a plastic sandwich bag, then bundle in tissue paper and slip into a reusable fabric sandwich bag tied with a ribbon.

Christmas Cranberries

BECKY JO SMITH KETTLE FALLS, WASHINGTON

Bourbon adds bite to this holiday standby, packed in a small heavy-duty glass storage container with a tight-fitting lid. Wrap in a vintage tea towel or cloth napkin, cinch with ribbon and adorn with small ornaments.

Orange-Cranberry Pound Cake with Vanilla Glaze

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 50 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 12 SERVINGS

- **1¼ cups butter, softened**
- **2¾ cups sugar**
- **5 eggs**
- **1 Tbsp. grated orange peel**
- **1 tsp. orange extract**
- **3 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 tsp. baking powder**
- **¼ tsp. salt**
- **1 cup 2% milk**
- **½ cup fresh or frozen cranberries, halved**
- **½ cup chopped walnuts**

GLAZE:

- **2 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **⅓ cup butter, melted**
- **2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **2 to 3 Tbsp. hot water**

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in orange peel and extract. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; add to the creamed mixture alternately with milk. Beat just until combined. Fold in cranberries and walnuts.

2. Transfer to a greased and floured 10-in. fluted tube pan. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

3. For glaze, in a small bowl, combine confectioners' sugar, butter, vanilla and enough water to achieve desired consistency. Drizzle over cake.

To make 16 mini pound cakes: *Make batter as directed, fill 16 greased and floured 4-in. fluted tube pans. Bake at 350° for 17-20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.*

Curried Cranberry Snack Mix

PREP: 10 MIN. • **COOK:** 15 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 4 QT.

- **6 cups Corn Chex**
- **3 cups Rice Chex**
- **1 can (6 oz.) French-fried onions**
- **2 cups miniature pretzels**
- **1½ cups honey-roasted peanuts**
- **⅓ cup butter, cubed**
- **3 Tbsp. honey**
- **2 Tbsp. honey mustard**
- **1½ tsp. curry powder**
- **1 tsp. garlic powder**
- **1½ cups dried cranberries, divided**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first five ingredients. Place the butter, honey, honey mustard, curry powder and garlic powder in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 1 to 1½ minutes, stirring every 30 seconds or until mixture is smooth. Pour over cereal mixture and toss to coat.

2. Place half of the mixture in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 2-3 minutes, stirring after each minute. Stir in ¾ cup cranberries. Immediately spread onto waxed paper; cool completely. Repeat with remaining cereal and cranberries. Store in an airtight container.

Christmas Cranberries

PREP: 35 MIN. • **PROCESS:** 15 MIN. • **YIELD:** 4 HALF-PINTS

- **2 pkg. (12 oz. each) fresh or frozen cranberries, thawed**
- **1½ cups sugar**
- **1 cup orange juice**
- **¼ cup bourbon**
- **3 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1 tsp. grated orange peel**

1. In a large saucepan, combine the cranberries, sugar, orange juice and bourbon. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 18-22 minutes or until berries pop and mixture has thickened.

2. Stir in vanilla and orange peel. Carefully ladle hot mixture into hot half-pint jars, leaving ¼-in. headspace. Remove air bubbles; wipe rims and adjust lids. Process for 15 minutes in a boiling-water canner.

Editor's Note: *The processing time listed is for altitudes of 1,000 feet or less. Add 1 minute to the processing time for each 1,000 feet of additional altitude.*

Cognac Date Squares

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 16 SERVINGS

- **1 lb. chopped dates**
- **¾ cup apple cider or juice**
- **¼ cup Cognac or brandy**
- **1 tsp. fine sea salt or kosher salt, divided**
- **2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1½ cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup old-fashioned oats**
- **1 cup packed light brown sugar**
- **1 tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **¾ tsp. baking soda**
- **¾ cup butter, melted**
- **½ cup finely chopped pistachios**

1. In a large saucepan, combine the dates, apple cider, Cognac and ½ tsp. salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes or until liquid is almost evaporated, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat; stir in vanilla. Cool to room temperature.

2. In a small bowl, combine the flour, oats, brown sugar, cinnamon, baking soda and remaining salt. Add butter; mix well. Press 1⅓ cups into a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Add pistachios to remaining oat mixture; set aside.

3. Spread date mixture over crust, top with reserved pistachio mixture. Bake at 350° for 24-28 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into squares.

Saltine Toffee Bark

LAURA COX BREWSTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Get ready for a new family favorite—like brittle, but better. Pack pieces of sweet-and-salty treasures in decorated cardboard gift tubes or recycled oatmeal containers wrapped with decorative paper (or use scraps of self-adhesive wallpaper). Trim with green pompom fringe. Make it fun by adding a bow made from newspaper.

Cinnamon-Chip Scones

BONNIE BUCKLY KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Paper bakery boxes lined with creatively cut tissue paper give these coffeehouse favorites a casual look. Dress up a box with polka-dot ribbon and a trio of fresh cinnamon sticks tied within a bow—their aroma is a clue to the treasures inside.

Chai Tea Mix

DONNA GISH BLUE SPRINGS, MISSOURI

A welcome warm-up in winter, this comforting blend of seasonal spices and tea in a glass sugar shaker is as easy to make as it is to give. Simply encircle the shaker with two bands of self-adhesive ribbon. Place in a stamped brown paper lunch bag and clip shut with a wooden clothespin wrapped with the same tape.

Amaretto Cream Truffles

SHERRY DAY PINCKNEY, MICHIGAN

Little luxuries deserve an elegant presentation. Decadent truffles cradled in mini paper cups are the perfect gift for a girlfriend. And the charming basket-weave box top? Piece of cake.

Cinnamon-Chip Scones

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN. • **YIELD:** 1 DOZEN

- **2½ cups all-purpose flour**
- **⅓ cup sugar**
- **3 tsp. baking powder**
- **1 tsp. ground cinnamon, divided**
- **½ cup cold butter**
- **⅔ cup cinnamon baking chips**
- **1 cup plus 1 Tbsp. heavy whipping cream, divided**
- **1 egg**
- **1 Tbsp. coarse sugar**

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and ½ tsp. cinnamon. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in baking chips. Whisk 1 cup cream and egg; stir into crumb mixture just until moistened.
2. Turn dough onto a floured surface; knead 10 times. Pat into a 9-in. circle. Cut into 12 wedges. Separate wedges and place on a greased baking sheet. Brush with remaining cream. Combine coarse sugar and remaining cinnamon; sprinkle over tops.
3. Bake at 400° for 14-16 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Saltine Toffee Bark

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN. + CHILLING • **YIELD:** 2 LBS.

- **40 saltines**
- **1 cup butter, cubed**
- **¾ cup sugar**
- **2 cups (12 oz.) semisweet chocolate chips**
- **1 pkg. (8 oz.) milk chocolate English toffee bits**

1. Line a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan with heavy-duty foil. Arrange saltines in a single layer on foil; set aside.
2. In a large heavy saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in sugar. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 1-2 minutes or until sugar is dissolved. Pour evenly over crackers.
3. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until bubbly. Immediately sprinkle with chocolate chips. Allow chips to soften for a few minutes, then spread over top. Sprinkle with toffee bits. Cool.
4. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or until set. Break into pieces. Store in an airtight container.

Amaretto Cream Truffles

PREP: 30 MIN. + CHILLING • **YIELD:** 30 SERVINGS

- **5 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped**
- **4 oz. milk chocolate, chopped**
- **⅓ cup heavy whipping cream**
- **2 Tbsp. Amaretto**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **2 Tbsp. sugar**
- **2 Tbsp. baking cocoa**
- **Assorted sprinkles, optional**

1. Place chocolates in a small bowl. In a small saucepan, bring cream just to a boil. Pour over chocolates; whisk until smooth. Stir in Amaretto and vanilla. Cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally. Cover and refrigerate for 1½ hours or until easy to handle.
2. In a small bowl, combine sugar and cocoa. Shape chocolate mixture into 1-in. balls, roll in cocoa mixture or, if desired, assorted sprinkles. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Chai Tea Mix

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN. • **YIELD:** 32 SERVINGS (8 CUPS TEA MIX)

- **2 cups sugar**
- **2 cups unsweetened instant tea**
- **1½ cups powdered French vanilla nondairy creamer**
- **1¼ cups powdered nondairy creamer**
- **1¼ cups packed brown sugar**
- **¾ cup nonfat dry milk powder**
- **2½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **1¼ tsp. ground nutmeg**
- **1¼ tsp. ground cardamom**
- **1¼ tsp. ground cloves**
- **1 tsp. ground allspice**
- **¼ tsp. white pepper**

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENT (for each serving)
- **1 cup hot 2% milk**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first 12 ingredients. In a blender, cover and process tea mixture in batches until powdery. Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place for up to 6 months.
2. To prepare one serving of chai tea: Place ¼ cup mix in a mug. Add hot milk; stir until combined.

DRESS IT UP!

Homemade baked goods deserve to be shown off in a dressed-up container that you can easily create at home. Grab **wrapping paper, yarn, ribbon or even newspaper** and you've got the makings for a festive container to give away.

Recycled Coffee Can, *page 61*

This one's easy. Simply wrap a coffee can and its lid with holiday wrapping paper. Attach a vivid-colored rick-rack trim or ribbon around the lid. Tie it all together with a wide bow.

Pompom, *page 63*

Line up a trio of yarn — red, fuchsia and pink — and create a dozen or so casual loops; wrap tail of yarn around center twice. Gather the loops and fold upward, wrapping the tail of the yarn around the base and tying off. Adhere to package.

Mini Cake Stand, *page 63*

Start with an "award" rosette from a hobby shop as a base. Cut slightly smaller circles out of colorful scrapbooking paper with patterned edge scissors. Apply the paper circles to the back side of the rosette and secure with a dab of glue.

Basket-Weave Lid, *page 65*

Cut light green strips of ribbon just long enough to wrap around and slightly inside the lid of a gift box. Secure the ends of the ribbon to the inside of the lid with a hot glue gun. Cover lid completely with light green ribbons, then weave deeper green ribbons between the light-green ribbons to achieve a lattice effect. Glue ends in place.

Newspaper Bow, *page 65*

Cut newspaper strips into desired width and various lengths. Form loops by folding ends of strip inward toward the center of strip; staple. Create small, medium and large looped strips; staple similar size strips together into an X shape. Stack X's, longest to smallest, on top of each other in alternating directions; staple together in center. Make one small loop and glue into center to hide staples and complete bow. ■

RESOURCES

- Reusable fabric sandwich bags (Cognac Date Squares, *page 63*). Lunchskins in apple and polka dot, **lunchskins.com**. *$8.11*
- Self-adhesive ribbon (Chai Tea Mix, *page 65*). Martha Stewart Crafts Adhesive Ribbon Tape Flourish, **amazon.com**. *$6*
- Paper bakery boxes (Cinnamon-Chip Scones, *page 65*). Eco-friendly Natural Brown Bakery Boxes, **brpboxshop.com**. *set of 10, $12*

MORE ONLINE
For more gift ideas from the kitchen and how-to packaging techniques, visit **tasteofhome.com/kitchengifts**

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resolutions

SPECIAL SECTION

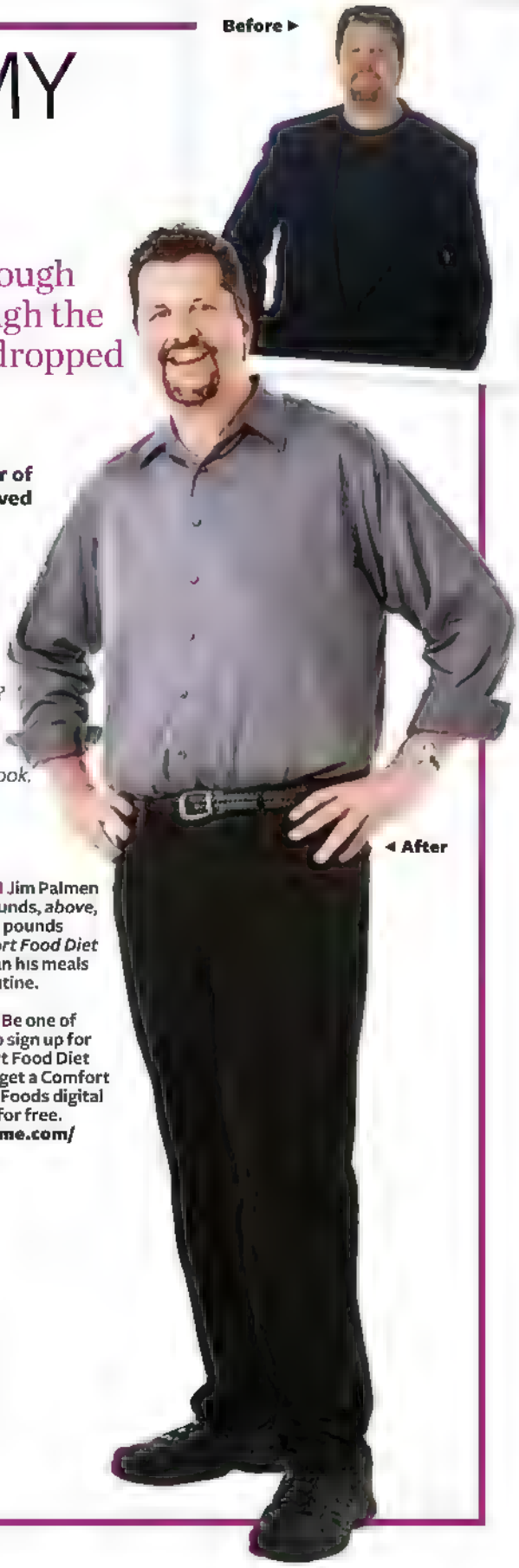
2012 The Year of Living *Amazingly*

It's here! **A shiny new year filled with promise** and anticipation. So what do you want to do with it? We were genuinely curious to know, so we asked and you—our inspiring readers—answered. It really comes down to this: **You want an amazing life. And we want to help make it happen.**

PHOTO: KEVIN MIYAZAKI

REDISCOVER MY *SVELTE* SELF

It's the ultimate resolution, the most historically popular promise: Lose enough weight to once again see the abs through the flab. Take some tips from a man who dropped 70 pounds in five months.



Meet Jim Palmen of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the creative director of creative marketing for *Taste of Home*. In January 2011, he resolved to get healthy. Five months later, he was 70 pounds lighter.

TOH: *How long have you struggled with your weight?*

Jim: It started about 15 years ago, when I began working for the world's largest food magazine. I put on a few pounds every year until it added up to more than 100 pounds.

TOH: *What was the turning point that made you decide to lose weight?*

Jim: I had a complete lack of energy and felt tired all the time. Plus, our office started a Comfort Food Diet group that followed the advice and recipes in the *Taste of Home Comfort Food Diet Cookbook*. It was the perfect opportunity to stay focused. Now I practice portion control, make healthier choices, exercise and keep track of the calories.

TOH: *Can you share some of your weight-loss tips?*

Jim: Choose lower calorie options when eating out, and doggie bag a portion for lunch the next day. If you need a late-night snack, keep fruit and vegetables front and center in the fridge and keep brownies and ice cream out, or at least have your spouse hide them. Keep an honest tally of your calorie intake. Find a friend or computer program or app to help. I use the program **loseit.com**.

A LESSER MAN Jim Palmen weighed 344 pounds, *above*, before losing 70 pounds using the *Comfort Food Diet Cookbook* to plan his meals and exercise routine.

FREEBIE HELP Be one of the first 1,000 to sign up for our free Comfort Food Diet newsletter, and get a Comfort Food Diet Party Foods digital edition booklet for free. Visit **tasteofhome.com/comfortdiet**.

Read more about how Jim and others shed pounds while enjoying family-friendly meals in the *Taste of Home Comfort Food Diet Cookbook*, the third edition of the best-selling weight loss series. You'll also find a six-week meal plan to jump-start your new lifestyle. It features 380 new recipes for every meal of the day, plus bonus chapters to get healthy meals on the table fast. $17.95 at most booksellers.

RESOLVE TO

Get into **SHAPE**

that's the magic of this approach—anyone can find 10 minutes to spare. Right?

The 10-minute total-body routine here does two things: It gives you a cardio workout and it also targets the muscle groups that, when regularly exercised, give you a body shape years younger. For you to get maximum benefit from this routine, follow these simple rules: Perform each move for 45 seconds and then go immediately on to the next one without a break (this keeps your heart rate up). And since it's only 10 minutes long, make sure you do it three times a day (for a total of 30 minutes).

JUMPING JACKS

BENEFIT: WARMS UP YOUR MUSCLES

1. Tighten up your stomach muscles, roll your shoulders back and expand your chest outward by squeezing your shoulder blades together.
2. Just as you did in grade school, jump out into the jumping jack position and immediately return to the starting position. Perform for 45 seconds.

PLANK ON BALL

BENEFITS: STRONG STOMACH, SHAPELY ARMS

1. Place the tops of your feet and shins on an exercise ball. (Beginners: Place your feet on the floor.)
2. Get into a push-up position but bend your elbows and place your weight on your forearms instead of your hands.
3. Straighten your body until it forms a line from ankles to shoulders. Engage your core by pulling your navel toward your spine and clenching your stomach as if you were going to be punched in the gut. Don't let your butt stick up or sink down.
4. Hold this position for 45 seconds. Many times, people hold their breath; don't. Breathe normally throughout.

SIDE-LYING LEG RAISE

BENEFITS: NICE HIPS AND GLUTES

1. Lie on your right side and rest your head on your right elbow. Stack your legs on top of each other.
2. Raise your left leg off the floor as high as you can, then slowly let it descend. Repeat for 45 seconds.
3. Switch sides. Do another 45 seconds.

WEIGHTED STORK

BENEFIT: BETTER BALANCE

1. Tighten your core muscles and stand with your feet slightly apart.
2. Raise your left leg until your thigh is parallel with the ground. Keeping your arms at your sides, hold this position for 45 seconds.
3. Switch legs and hold for another 45 seconds. **Note:** When you first start doing this, you can be a little wobbly. Start near a wall or counter in case you need to reach out for support.

SPLIT REVERSE SQUAT WITH PRESS

BENEFITS: STRONGER CORE, GLUTES AND HIPS

1. Tighten your core and stand with your feet together.
2. Step back with your right foot, but keep your weight on your left heel.
3. Rotate your right buttock forward so you can feel your right hip working.
4. Hold 3 seconds and return to starting position.
5. Repeat on other side, then continue to alternate sides for 45 seconds.

MONSTER WALK

BENEFITS: FIRMER GLUTES, HIPS

1. Wrap a resistance band just above both your ankles.
2. Pressing against the band, place feet approximately shoulder width apart. Tighten your core. Slightly bend your knees and hips.
3. Take a half step to the side with your right foot and then follow with a half step with your left. Always maintain tension on the band.
4. Take 10 steps to the right and then 10 to the left. Perform for 45 seconds.

SUPERMAN

BENEFIT: BETTER POSTURE

1. While lying facedown, tighten your stomach muscles. Extend your arms forward, like Superman in flight.
2. Raise your arms and your legs off the floor simultaneously.
3. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

BALL SQUAT

BENEFITS: CORE STABILITY, NICE GLUTES, FIRM THIGHS

1. Stand and place a toning ball or light medicine ball between your knees.
2. Engage your core by pulling your navel toward your spine and slowly squat, keeping your knees over your ankles until knees are bent at about 60 degrees. You should feel a nice burn in your thighs.
3. Squeeze your knees together and hold for 3 seconds. Return to starting position. Repeat for 45 seconds.

AIRPLANE

BENEFITS: STRONGER QUADS AND CORE, GREAT BALANCE

1. Place your feet together and firm up your stomach muscles. Lift your arms to the sides to shoulder height.
2. Bend your left knee a bit, then slowly, carefully bend forward at the hips, extending your right leg out behind you until your shoulders, back and ankle form a straight line as you balance on your left foot.
3. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Return to starting position. Perform for 45 seconds and then do the same for 45 seconds on your other side.

MORE ONLINE

For simple ways to get off the couch and add more activity to your day without setting foot in the gym, see Vonda Wright's story "5 Easy Ways to Boost Your Metabolism" at **tasteofhome.com/5easymoves**.

This fitness routine was from *Bod Bliss*. Dr. Wright an orthopedic surgeon who prac in Pittsburgh, is a member of *Taste of Home's* health advisory panel and author of *Fitness After 40: How to*

GO THE DISTANCE

Make good on your promise to train for a marathon, and the benefits will go far beyond any runner's high. "You're not only choosing a commitment to do something athletic, you're making a fundamental investment in yourself," says Vonda Wright, a Pittsburgh-based orthopedic surgeon and longtime runner herself.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TRAINING Good information means great results. Dr. Wright suggests **marathonnation.us** and **www.coolrunning.com**

START EARLY "If you've never run at all, you need a year to train," she says. "If you can run six miles now, you can get going to marathon length in six months."

INVEST IN QUALITY FOOTWEAR You'll lose enthusiasm (and some skin) if your feet hurt, so get fitted for proper running shoes at a reputable retailer. The site **runnersworld.com** has a store finder under its "shop" link.

PACE YOURSELF It's a myth that you must run daily. Three times a week is fine. "If you miss a few days, it's no big deal," she says.

CROSS-TRAIN TO AVOID PAIN "Runners who *only* run get hurt, usually as they're ramping up their mileage," Dr. Wright says. She recommends resistance and cardio workouts; spinning is her top pick.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE Maintain the routine you've set while training on the big day. It's not the time to wear new shoes or change eating habits. "There should be nothing new on race day," says Dr. Wright.

Peanut Butter Snack Bars

Athletes need snacks that are as on-the-go as they are. These portable bars combine protein and whole grains to fuel workouts.

—**NETTIE HOGAN** WADSWORTH, OHIO

PREP: 25 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 3 DOZEN

- **3¼ cups Kashi Heart to Heart honey toasted oat cereal**
- **2¾ cups old-fashioned oats**
- **1 cup unblanched almonds**
- **½ cup sunflower kernels**
- **¼ cup ground flaxseed**
- **¼ cup uncooked oat bran cereal**
- **¼ cup wheat bran**
- **¼ cup flaxseed**
- **3 Tbsp. sesame seeds**
- **2 cups creamy peanut butter**
- **1½ cups honey**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first nine ingredients. In a small saucepan, combine peanut butter and honey. Cook over medium heat until peanut butter is melted, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat. Stir in vanilla. Pour over cereal mixture; mix well.

2. Transfer to a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan; gently press into pan. Cool completely. Cut into bars. Store in an airtight container.

Nutrition Facts *1 bar equals 215 calories, 12 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 87 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 7 g protein.*

Diabetic Exchanges *1½ starch, 1 high-fat meat.*

Editor's Note *Look for oat bran cereal near the hot cereals or in the natural foods section.*

After (or even during) long runs, it's important to replenish and refuel. This lets your body recover faster and better for the next run.

Clif Shot Roks With a sturdy shell that prevents melting, Shot Roks let you control your protein intake piece by piece. Available in Peanut Butter, Chocolate and Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough. **clifbar.com**

GU Energy Gels GU's gels include electrolytes, antioxidant blends and amino acids to keep your body working its hardest. Available in many flavors, from Espresso Love to Jet Blackberry. **guenergy.com**

Honey Stinger Organic Pink Lemonade Energy Chews These sweet-tart chews are rich in carbohydrates to help you power through long runs. **honeystinger.com**

Get Things Done Dreading tackling that project? That closet? That job hunt? Make a list of everything that's stopping you. Often, just looking at obstacles helps you see a way around them.

I RESOLVE TO

Befriend the Sandman

Your pillow knows what your stomach has been up to.

A lot of people are ravenous at night. Usually that's because they've either skipped breakfast (see *page 74* for more on this) or restricted their calories too much over the course of the rest of the day. Late-evening hunger is your body's way of saying you didn't feed it properly earlier.

Katherine Zeratsky, a registered dietitian at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, suggests a small snack that blends the sleep-inducing amino acid tryptophan with hunger-reducing proteins and complex carbohydrates (see "Sleepy Snacks," *below*, for suggestions). Eat about an hour before you plan to turn in so your snack has time to take effect and make you drowsy.

It's important to keep the big picture in mind as well. Erratic eating habits, chronic poor nutrition, and being underweight or overweight can lead to sleep disturbances. "Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet, in appropriate quantities," Zeratsky says. Not only will your sleep improve in the short term, you'll be on the road to better overall health—a major factor in getting better *zzzs*.

SLUMBER STEALERS

Caffeine Avoid this ubiquitous stimulant for four to six hours before bed. Coffee, tea and colas are obvious no-nos, but other sources of caffeine can get overlooked: chocolate, cocoa and coffee-flavored frozen desserts, for example. Read the labels on soft drinks (even orange- and citrus-flavored sodas may contain caffeine). Pain relievers and cold remedies also can be culprits.

Alcohol Although booze has a sedative effect at first, it can inhibit deeper sleep stages later in the night. Again, give it four to six hours before bedtime.

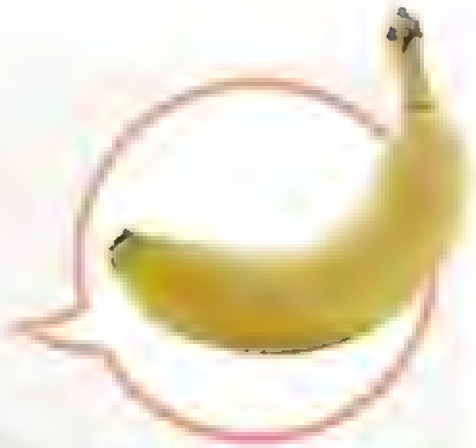
Sleepy Snacks

- **Yogurt** and [illegible]
- **Cottage cheese** with whole grain crackers
- **Peanut butter** or other nut butters on a mini whole grain bagel
- **Turkey** on [illegible]
- **Scrambled egg** [illegible]
- **Whole grain cereal** [illegible]

MORE ONLINE
For more healthy snack ideas, visit **tasteofhome.com/healthysnacks**

EAT **BETTER** BREAKFASTS

Study after study proves that a morning meal is a body and brain booster. *Taste of Home* advisory board member Cynthia Sass, RD, offers three breakfast options.



BETTER
¢ skim milk

BEST ½ c. nonfat Greek yogurt, 1 cup berries, ¼ cup toasted oats, 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds, dash of cinnamon

GOOD Simply eating something every morning is important. "Skipping breakfast is linked to weight gain because long stretches without food slow metabolism and trigger late-night overeating," she says, "and it's a missed opportunity to deliver key nutrients."

BETTER "Lean protein like yogurt, milk, cheese, soy milk, eggs or beans helps you feel alert and satiated, so it's the best way to feel on top of your game," says Cynthia. Avoid sugary breakfasts, which offer a quick rush followed by an energy crash.

BEST Aim for a balanced combo of fruit, whole grains, lean protein and plant-based fat loaded with a broad spectrum of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Good example: a bowl of berries, toasted oats, nonfat yogurt and sliced almonds.

Cynthia Sass, a nationally known nutrition and health expert, is the author of *Cinch!: Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds and Lose Inches*. To learn more about Cynthia, visit her website at **cynthiasass.com**.

Need for Speed If finding time for breakfast means serving it at warp speed, try Jimmy Dean D-lights, specifically the Canadian Bacon Honey Wheat Muffin and Turkey Sausage Breakfast Bowl. An even better bet? Bob's Red Mill instant oatmeal or muesli cereal (Add yogurt, dried fruit and a splash of milk. Yum!)

STOP **PIGGING** OUT

Fill half your plate with veggies or fruits, a quarter with whole grains and a quarter with a protein. Make it easy to do this by using portion-control dishware.

SlimWare Portion Control Plates
These chic melamine plates make portion size a groovy design element. The graphics double as unobtrusive food placement guides: Fill the biggest area with vegetables, the next-biggest with carbs and side dishes, and the smallest with lean protein. **slimware.com**. *4 for $35*

Fit & Fresh Breakfast Chiller
Tote this clever container for a sensibly sized breakfast on the go. The top bowl holds a cup and a half of cereal, the middle one is sized for a cup of milk or yogurt, and ¾ cup of fruit fills the bottom. A removable ice ring keeps items chilled. **fit-fresh.com**. *$10*

Try More Adventurous Food Once a week, pick up a new-to-you piece of produce—purple cauliflower, perhaps, or peas in the pod—and then figure out just what the heck to do with it (that's half the fun, by the way). Find cauliflower in varying colors at **melissasfarmfreshproduce.com**.

RESOLVE TO

Have Healthy Lunches Instead of Hitting a Drive-Thru

For grab-and-go lunch solutions, check out Campbell's Healthy Choice reduced-sodium soups, Healthy Choice meals, and Kashi frozen meals. For dessert, bring SnackWell's popcorn or VitaMuffins. Or, on mornings when you have a little extra time, try the ideas in "Brown Bag Bonus," *at right*.

BROWN BAG BONUS

Health up lunches with these easy ideas

- Stir pureed roasted red peppers into mayo and spread on sandwiches.
- Give PB&J a fun and healthy profile with low-sugar peanut butter and jelly, whole wheat bread and a cookie cutter.
- Use our No-Knead Harvest Bread. Recipe on page 91.
- Make salads with whole grain pasta or brown rice.

FEED MY FAMILY BETTER

A little sleight of hand and no-fuss cooking methods elevate everyday veggies into super-foods. Watch them disappear. Case in point: We tested—and loved—microwave potato chips.

Roasted Carrot Fries ▶ Turn carrot sticks into fun "fries" with a happier health profile by popping them in the oven and serving them fry-style.

Cut 1 lb. fresh **carrots** into ½-in. sticks. Toss with 2 tsp. **olive oil** and ½ tsp. **salt**; transfer to a greased baking sheet. Bake at 450° for 10-12 minutes or until crisp-tender.

◀ **Cauliflower Popcorn** Roasting transforms this veggie into a delectable snack so mellow-delish that your family will gobble it up like popcorn. Great as a side dish, too, plus it's full of vitamin C.

Break 1 large head **cauliflower** into small florets. Toss with 1 Tbsp. **olive oil** and ½ tsp. **garlic salt**; transfer to a greased baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 15-18 minutes or until tender, stirring once. Sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. grated **Parmesan cheese**.

Purple Potato Chips ▶ Lose the guilt with potato chips when you skip the frying. Cook up crispy fat free chips with purple potatoes in 3 minutes using a microwave-safe chip maker (see *below*). They're packed with health-boosting antioxidants. Try nutrient-rich sweet potatoes or beets, too.

Mastrad's Chip Maker Make chips in minutes with Mastrad's mandoline slicer and microwave-safe baking tray; **topchips.com**; $20

RESOLVE TO

Satisfy My Sweet Tooth... Smartly

Whether baking (see Honey & Spice Snack Cake, *right*) or adding a little something to coffee, you'll be pretty pleased with these sweet substitutes.

Splenda, the sugar substitute in the familiar yellow packets, is calorie free and stable enough for baking.

Stevia is a fine white powder made from the leaves of the stevia plant. It has the added benefit of helping blood sugar hold steady. There are various brands, but Truvia gets raves.

Agave nectar is a sweetener made from the juice of the agave plant. It's as runny as honey and akin to a super subtle maple syrup. It can sweeten tea, coffee and just about any recipe calling for something syrupy and sticky. It contains about the same number of calories per teaspoon as sugar but it's sweeter, allowing you to use less.

PACK A STACK OF SNACKS When the afternoon munchies hit, only the mightiest can resist the call of the vending machine. Prepare for this by having a stash of healthful snacks at work. Try Sabra Hummus Singles, Justin's Nut Butter Squeeze Packs and Bear Naked cereals and trail mixes.

Honey & Spice Snack Cake

The sweetness of honey, the bold flavors of nutmeg and cloves and the crunch of walnuts make for happy snacking.
—**AMY AUSLOO** MENOMONEE FALLS, WISCONSIN

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 12 SERVINGS

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **Sugar substitute equivalent to ¾ cup sugar**
- **2½ tsp. baking powder**
- **1½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **½ tsp. baking soda**
- **¼ tsp. ground nutmeg**
- **¼ tsp. ground cloves**
- **⅛ tsp. salt**
- **¾ cup unsweetened applesauce**
- **2 eggs**
- **¼ cup canola oil**
- **¼ cup honey**
- **¼ cup finely chopped walnuts, toasted**

OPTIONAL GANACHE

- **¼ cup dark chocolate chips**
- **3 Tbsp. heavy whipping cream**

1. In a large bowl, combine the first eight ingredients. Whisk the applesauce, eggs, oil and honey. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in walnuts.
2. Pour into a 9-in. square baking pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely on a wire rack.
3. For optional ganache, place chocolate chips in a small bowl. In a microwave, heat cream for 20-30 seconds or until bubbly. Pour over chocolate; whisk until smooth. Cool slightly; drizzle over cake.
Editor's Note: *This recipe was tested with Splenda no-calorie sweetener.*

MORE ONLINE!
For more quick recipes ready in 30 minutes or less, visit **tasteofhome.com/30**

CONQUER CRUNCH TIME

Stock your refrigerator with at-the-ready veggies to boost the odds that you and your family will gobble them up. A few tempting dips, *right*, will help even more. But first, make sure your red peppers, pea pods, carrots and cucumbers stay fresh in the fridge with these tips from Joe Spina, director of refrigeration products for Electrolux.

Clockwise from top: **Garlicky Peanut Dip, Shallot-Blue Cheese Dip and Chipotle Avocado Dip**

Store fruits and vegetables separately. Most refrigerators have two crisper drawers for a reason: Vegetables need a moister environment, while fruits do best under drier conditions. Fortunately, many drawers now have humidity dials and are generally marked so you know what should go where. Check yours, and make sure you get it right.

Know what you can prep, and what you can't. Hardy veggies—carrots, radishes, broccoli, pea pods—can be washed and cut up a couple of days before you plan to use them. Prep more tender items like leafy greens just before eating. According to Spina, "they tend to trap a lot of water when washed and are more susceptible to spoilage."

Wipe away standing water. Most crisper drawers have ridged bottoms to trap water and keep it away from vegetables. If you find standing water, blot with a paper towel.

Keep bags open. Don't seal plastic storage bags. Produce continues to give off gases after it's picked, and gases trapped in closed bags cause food to spoil more quickly.

Garlicky Peanut Dip

A perfect balance of spices makes this dip addictive. It also perks up stir-fry dishes.
—**SADIE BUECKSLER** ASHLAND, WISCONSIN

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN. • **YIELD:** 1 CUP

- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **2 Tbsp. olive oil**
- **¼ cup sunflower kernels**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **⅔ cup water**
- **½ cup creamy peanut butter**
- **3 Tbsp. brown sugar**
- **2 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce**
- **¼ tsp. ground ginger**
- **¼ tsp. ground cumin**
- **¼ tsp. pepper**
- **Dash cayenne pepper**
- **Assorted fresh vegetables**

In a small skillet, saute onion in oil until tender. Add sunflower kernels and garlic; cook 2 minutes longer. Add the water, peanut butter, brown sugar, soy sauce and spices. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until blended. Serve with vegetables

Snacking Strips Pair crunchy carrots, peas and radishes with dunking dips for super snacks.

Shallot-Blue Cheese Dip

Perfect party fare, th s five-ingredient dip is a treat on baked potatoes, too.
—**ALISA PIRTLE** BROWNS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

PREP: 10 MIN. • **COOK:** 30 MIN. + CHILLING
YIELD: 2 CUPS

- **1½ cups thinly sliced shallots**
- **1 Tbsp. canola oil**
- **¾ cup reduced-fat mayonnaise**
- **¾ cup reduced-fat sour cream**
- **1½ cups (6 oz.) crumbled blue cheese**
- **Assorted fresh vegetables**

1. In a large skillet, saute shallots in oil until softened. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook shallots for 25-30 minutes or until deep golden brown, stirring occasionally. Cool to room temperature.
2. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise and sour cream. Stir in blue cheese and caramelized shallots. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Serve with vegetables.

Chipotle Avocado Dip

Thanks to the avocado base, this dip provides a bonus of hea thy fats and fiber. Trying spooning t on tacos, too.
—**BARBARA OLIPHANT** VALLEY CENTER, KANSAS

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 15 MIN. • **YIELD:** 3 CUPS

- **3 medium ripe avocados, peeled**
- **1 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise**
- **¼ cup finely chopped onion**
- **1 Tbsp. finely chopped banana pepper**
- **1 Tbsp. minced pickled hot cherry peppers**
- **1½ tsp. garlic powder**
- **1 to 1½ tsp. ground chipotle pepper**
- **1 tsp. onion powder**
- **1 tsp. seasoned salt**
- **Assorted fresh vegetables**

In a small bowl, mash avocados. Stir in the mayonnaise, onion, peppers and seasonings. Chill until serving. Serve with vegetables.

CULTIVATE CULINARY CURIOSITY

Peruse a seed catalog and think beyond the usual garden-variety herbs and veggies. Give holy basil a go, for example! A sacred plant in the Hindu religion, it's revered in India for its remarkable medicinal properties, which include everything from relieving stress to boosting immunity. Find it and other cool edible discoveries at tasteofhome.com.

I RESOLVE TO

Green Up With Homemade Kitchen Cleaners

You may need to bring out the b g guns for ma,or messes, but somet mes you can just raid the pantry for t me-tested cleaners that are greener, yet st l add spark e

VINEGAR
Add vinegar to your dishwasher n p ace of a rinse agent to reduce residue and water spots.
Combine 1 part vinegar with 4 parts water, boil in microwave to soften stubborn splatters w thin, then use a rag to w pe off the spots.
Use straight vinegar to disinfect wooden cutting boards.

BAKING SODA
Moisten baking soda with a few drops of .quid dish soap and use to cut heavy grease buildup.
Add baking soda to the bottom of the dishwasher to absorb linger ng food odors.
Spruce up silverware by rubbing with a paste of 1 part water to 3 parts baking soda. Rinse thorough y.

LEMON
Squeeze the juice from a emon half onto a laminated countertop stain. Let sit for a few minutes, then rub with the outside of the emon unt l the stain is gone. Rinse w th water.
Grind lemon peel in the garbage disposa to c ean and freshen it.
Salt lemon ha ves and use them to po sh copper pots and pans.

OPT FOR ORGANIC AND LOCAL FOOD Sophie Uliano, author of *Gorgeously Green*, says your first priority should be to switch to organic for ingredients you consume frequently, such as lettuce. But local is also important because long travel times sap fresh food of nutrients. Keep costs down by seeking out store-brand organics (organic and local are now carried in big chains, including Whole Foods Market and Walmart), shopping farmers markets (find one at **localharvest.org**), and eating more veggies (we just checked; an organic turnip costs a mere 15 cents). The most cost-savvy thing you can do? Cook from scratch. (And you know where to find recipes—*Taste of Home*, of course!)

Choose Carefully

If possible, opt for organic when buying these produce items, sometimes called the dirty dozen. They are typically higher in pesticides than other produce, according to the Environmental Working Group. For more information, visit **ewg.org**

Apples • Bell Peppers • Blueberries (domestic) • Celery • Grapes
Kale/Collard Greens • Lettuce
Nectarines (imported) • Peaches
Potatoes • Spinach
Strawberries

CURB THE **COFFEE**

This is one resolution you don't have to try very hard to meet: In moderation, coffee has its place in a healthy diet. It's packed with antioxidants—compounds that act as nature's repair kit for cell damage. New research connects regular coffee intake to a reduced risk of Parkinson's disease and liver cancer. It may also contribute to heart health, ward off diabetes and lessen the chances of dementia.

But before you jump from a cup to a carafe, be aware that more than two to four cups a day can give you insomnia, stomach irritation, anxiety and other jangly effects. And some research shows that an average of six cups of unfiltered coffee a day, such as that made with espresso machines, French presses and percolators, can elevate bad cholesterol.

For optimal health, switch up some of your cups of coffee for tea. It has less caffeine and the green, black and white varieties all shine in the antioxidant department. Tea may also maintain dental, bone, heart and brain health, and it contains an amino acid that promotes relaxation. Choose white tea for the lowest levels of caffeine (15 mg per serving), followed by green tea (20 mg) and black tea (40 mg).

Winter Herb Tea Mix

This caffeine-free option is a sweet-spicy blend of mint, sage, rosemary, thyme and honey that melts away winter blahs.

—SUE GRONHOLZ
BEAVER DAM, WISCONSIN

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 10 MIN
YIELD: 18 SERVINGS

- **6 Tbsp. dried mint**
- **1 Tbsp. dried sage leaves**
- **1 Tbsp. dried rosemary, crushed**
- **1 Tbsp. dried thyme**

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS (for each serving)

- **1 cup boiling water**
- **1 tsp. honey**
- **1 lemon wedge**

1. Combine the mint, sage, rosemary and thyme. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months

2. To prepare tea: Place 1½ tsp. tea mix in glass measuring cup. With the end of a wooden spoon handle, crush mixture until aromas are released.

3. Add boiling water. Cover and steep for 10 minutes. Strain tea into a mug, discarding herbs. Stir in honey; serve with lemon.

Hot Stuff The minty aroma of this tea puts you in a holiday mood and boosts your alertness. (See "Sniff Out Happiness," *page 87.*)

We sipped and slurped our way through the supermarket to bring you our picks of great coffees and teas that are reasonably priced.

COFFEE

◂ Dunkin' Donuts Original Blend This doughnut shop classic, a medium roast, goes down smooth and easy.

◂ Archer Farms House Blend Part of Target's house brand coffee line, this medium roast has a well-rounded mellowness.

◂ Millstone Breakfast Blend Try this perky light roast to start your morning on a high note.

TEA

▲ Bigelow Known for Constant Comment, its citrus and spice black tea, Bigelow has a wide range of teatime choices. We like the Cozy Chamomile and Mint Medley herbal blends, as well as decaffeinated versions of Earl Grey and Spiced Chai.

▲ Celestial Seasonings Long known for herbal blends such as Sleepytime, Lemon Zinger and Mandarin Orange Spice, Celestial Seasonings also offers green teas (caffeinated and caffeine-free), wellness teas and more. Two of our favorites are the Pomegranate Green Tea and Peach Blossom White Tea.

I RESOLVE TO

Find a Better Fizz

You're probably well aware of the adverse effects of too much soda pop on belly and brain. As if that's not enough, many colas contain phosphoric acid, which saps bone mineral density. The good news: You don't have to drop the bubbly stuff altogether. Try these smart solutions to get your fizz fix.

iSi Twist 'n Sparkle ▸ Pour chilled juice, water, cocktail mixers or other beverages into this gadget, insert a soda charger and voilà—sparklers in seconds. **williams-sonoma.com** $50

▲ Sodastream Home Soda Makers Sodastream's kits come with all the equipment you need to turn ordinary water into plain seltzer or custom soda. The company sells more than four dozen flavors you can add to your beverage, but you can also skip them in favor of simple sparkling H2O. **sodastreamusa.com** $80-250, depending on model and accessories

▲ IZZE Sparkling Juice With just two ingredients—fruit juice and sparkling water—these sippers are a good alternative to traditional soft drinks. IZZE also sells vitamin-fortified and low-cal versions, as well as natural sodas. **izze.com** $4-5 for a 4-pack

GO BIG AND **BUY IN BULK**

Company-Worthy Orange Ginger Chicken
Easy Weekend Skillet Roasted Lemon Chicken with Potatoes
Make Ahead Zesty Chicken Tortellini Soup

Orange Ginger Chicken

This riff on a popular Chinese takeout dish is one of my husband's all-time favorites! We spoon it over rice.
—**TONI SCHILZ** SAN FRANCISCO

PREP: 15 MIN. • **COOK:** 20 MIN.
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 6 boneless skinless chicken thighs (about 1½ lbs.), cubed
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 2 Tbsp. canola oil
- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup orange marmalade
- 2 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- ½ to 1 tsp. ground ginger
- Optional garnishes: thinly sliced green onion and sesame seeds

1. Place flour in a large resealable plastic bag. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Add to bag, a few pieces at a time, and shake to coat. In a large skillet, cook chicken in oil in batches over medium heat until chicken is no longer pink. Remove and keep warm.
2. In the same skillet, combine the juice, marmalade, soy sauce, honey and ginger. Bring to a boil, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan; cook and stir until thickened. Return chicken to pan; heat through. Sprinkle with green onion and sesame seeds if desired.

Skillet-Roasted Lemon Chicken with Potatoes

This one-skillet meal delivers classic roast chicken flavor in half the time, thanks to boneless skinless thighs. It's an easy, savory mea .
—**MINDY ROTTMUND** LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN.
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 medium lemon, thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced and divided
- ¼ tsp. grated lemon peel
- ½ tsp. salt, divided
- ¼ tsp. pepper, divided
- 8 boneless skinless chicken thighs (4 oz. each)
- ¼ tsp. dried rosemary, crushed
- 1 lb. fingerling potatoes, halved lengthwise
- 8 cherry tomatoes

1. Grease a 10-in. cast-iron skillet with 1 tsp. oil. Arrange lemon slices in a single layer in skillet.
2. Combine 1 tsp. oil, 2 of the minced garlic cloves, the lemon peel, ¼ tsp. of the salt and ⅛ tsp. of the pepper; rub over chicken. Place over lemon slices.
3. In a large bowl, combine rosemary and the remaining oil, garlic, salt and pepper. Add the potatoes and tomatoes; toss to coat. Arrange over chicken. Bake, uncovered, at 450° for 25-30 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink and potatoes are tender.

Zesty Chicken Tortellini Soup

I love coming home knowing this soup is waiting for me. Don't hesitate to toss in whatever veggies you have on hand.
—**NANCY LATULIPPE** SIMCOE, ONTARIO

PREP: 40 MIN. • **COOK:** 10 MIN. + FREEZING
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS (2½ QT.)

- 4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 4 cups reduced-sodium beef broth
- 6 boneless skinless chicken thighs (about 1½ lbs.)
- 4 medium carrots, sliced
- 2 celery ribs, sliced
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 envelope reduced-sodium onion soup mix
- 1½ tsp. dried parsley flakes
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- ½ tsp. poultry seasoning
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 2½ cups frozen cheese tortellini

1. In a Dutch oven, bring chicken broth and beef broth to a boil; reduce heat. Add chicken and poach, uncovered, for 25-30 minutes or until a meat thermometer reads 170°. Remove chicken; cool slightly.
2. Add carrots, celery, onion, soup mix, parsley and seasonings to broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
3. Cool soup. Meanwhile, remove chicken from bones; coarsely chop chicken; discard bones. Add cheese tortellini and chicken to soup. Transfer to freezer containers; freeze for up to 3 months.
4. To use frozen soup: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Place in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook, uncovered, for 5-10 minutes or until heated through and tortellini is tender.

MORE ONLINE
For more tips on keeping a stocked pantry, visit **tasteofhome.com/pantry**

DRIVE HOME, NOT THRU

With long workdays, tangled traffic and kids on the verge of a revolt, it's easy to understand why families hit the drive-thru to solve the dinner dilemma. But costs mount quickly: On average, a family of four spends $20 to $25 on a single fast-food meal. Fix those same burgers at home and you'll spend less than $10 feeding those same four people. Plan ahead for quick and simple suppers. Then put the money saved to far better use.

After 3 months...
Build up your emergency savings. Ceilings leak, water heaters fizzle, tires go flat. Use this chunk of cash to bolster your bank account; keep it growing with regular contributions.

After 1 year...
Pay off a credit card. Wipe out the balance on a small card, then put the former monthly payment toward a card with a bigger balance. Known as the debt snowball, this method keeps you motivated because you see steady, increasingly significant results.

After 3 years...
Kiss car payments goodbye. Get rid of a loan that's dragging on, and you'll free up funds to invest in repairs that keep your vehicle running smoothly for years to come. Check with your lender to be sure your contract includes no prepayment penalties.

Cut Food Costs

- Join a cow pool. Save 25 percent of the cost of beef by persuading friends, relatives or neighbors to share a side of beef. Check **localharvest.org** to find farmers in your area. The site also steers you toward other farm products, including pork and poultry, vegetables, nuts, dairy products and grains.
- Clip coupons carefully. Don't fall prey to a "$1 off" coupon or a "buy one, get one free" offer unless you really need the product.
- Buy in bulk (see *page 82* for helpful recipes). Divvy up large packages into small portions and place in containers or plastic bags to store in the freezer.
- And you may know it, but practice it religiously: Don't buy food when you're hungry. Have a snack 30 minutes before you shop.

I RESOLVE TO

Lose the Clutter
Donate a kitchen item you never use. How about that left-handed spatula, for starters?

I RESOLVE TO

Keep Time From Flying
Jot down how you spend every minute for a week. Now take a long, hard look and align your priorities with your reality. Every day.

I RESOLVE TO

Make Time For Family Meals

Remember the old Nike catchphrase and just do it: Kids who eat with their families are more likely to have better eating habits, a healthier weight and a more nutritious diet than those who don't. Family meals also reduce the odds of eating disorders, according to a study in the journal *Pediatrics*.

There's more—when families sit down for dinner, children have a better chance to deve op important vocabulary and conversational skills. Older kids and teens do better in school, are happier, enjoy good peer relationships and have stronger family bonds.

I RESOLVE TO

Be the Keeper of Family Recipes

Keep traditions strong by preserving recipes in a cookbook. Sites such as **createmycookbook.com** and **blurb.com** make it simple. Or start organizing family recipes, along with your favorites from *Taste of Home*, in a personal online recipe box at **tasteofhome.com**.

For mealtime ideas and recipes see "Sunday Dinner," *page 20*, and "Weeknight Solutions," *page 50*. For even more dinner recipes, go to **tasteofhome.com/dinner**

REMEMBER SPECIAL DAYS

Every day is a milestone for someone. These easy tools will help you track special events and remind you to bake a cake, send a card or plan a shindig with plenty of time left over to dig through the odds-and-ends drawer in search of birthday candles.

UncommonGoods Regreet Greeting Card Organizer Keep this nifty notebook stocked and ready, and you'll never have to send a belated card again. Write birthdays, anniversaries and more on calendar style pages, then tuck in the appropriate cards for each month. **uncommongoods.com**. *$20*

Tiny Prints Cards Customize your cards with the help of online stationer Tiny Prints. Add your own text and photos, and the company will print, address and mail the cards. You can even schedule cards ahead of time and set up email reminders. **tinyprints.com**. *$4* per card

bigdates.com This online reminder service couldn't be simpler: After you enter key dates, you'll get email and mobile reminders with suggestions for suitable e-cards, gifts and more. *$10-15* for annual membership (first three months are free)

We're Going to a Party!

Taste of Home wants to help make every birthday as special as the person celebrating it. So, beginning with February/March 2012, we'll feature a spectacular homemade celebration cake in each issue. And we'll provide decorating ideas and tips to add that extra wow factor. Do you have a recipe that will help us spread the love? Join in the fun and send it to **editors@tasteofhome.com**. Please put "Cake" in the subject line.

Drink More Champagne, Eat More Lobster and Chocolate

CHAMPAGNE California bubbles are just as effervescent as those that come from France, but with a far more favorable ratio of pennies to bubbles. One California sparkler we like: J Cuvée 20 Brut. Plus, it's in a bottle you just want to embrace. **jwine.com**. *$24*

LOBSTER If you're going to do lobster, you may as well do lobster. **Getmainelobster.com** lavishes you with live lobsters, tools to crack 'em open after cooking, and hilariously charming comic instructions. All that's missing is a seaside shack.

CHOCOLATE Oh, yes. Chocolate makes everything better. For tips on finding the best of the best, see *above right.*

We keep a desk-side stash of favorites (truffles that spill liquid caramel when nibbled, anyone?) from these fine people:

Valerie Confections
(**valerieconfections.com**)
See's Candies
(**sees.com**)
Gandolf's
(**gandolfsfinechocolate.com**)

The Dark Arts Revealed

- I look to see how clean and orderly the shop is. Lots of extraneous decoration—bows, baskets and ribbons—generally means the chocolatiers are less focused on the chocolate.
- For assessing their skills with chocolate truffles, I always try ones with caramel, marshmallows or nuts first. Those are basics that should be done well. I also look for something creative, which shows the skill of the chocolatier.
- Good chocolate is uniform in color. No streaks. It should snap when you break it and shouldn't smell like coconut (a sign of cheap chocolate).

I RESOLVE TO

Live More Colorfully
Add a splash of unexpected—maybe even uncoordinated—pizzazz to your kitchen: Art you adore. A zany family snapshot. Fresh cut flowers plunked in a canning jar. Go wild.

I RESOLVE TO

Take Five Minutes
Slip away to a quiet spot, or just close the door. Close your eyes and do nothing. Do it once or twice daily and see how it changes everything.

PHOTO: JAMES BAIGRIE/GETTY IMAGES (LOBSTER)

I RESOLVE TO

Sniff Out Happiness

Essential Tips

Local health, home and beauty shops are great places to look for essential oils. Or order online: **kiehls.com**, **starwest-botanicals.com** and **eurocacia.com**

If your mood has more ups and downs than the stock market, keep it on the upswing with the power of scent. "Smells have an impact on a wide variety of behaviors," says Alan Hirsch, founder and neurological director of Chicago's Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation. "A pleasant odor induces a positive state, and if you sniff it first thing in the morning, the rest of the day will go better."

Dr. Hirsch recommends green apple and cucumber to reduce anxiety. For a sense of comfort, take a whiff of vanilla or baby powder. Crabby from fatigue? The aromas of jasmine and peppermint can help you feel more alert.

Although the market is loaded with gadgets that give off fragrance, you can easily get the same benefits on the cheap, Hirsch says. Dab a few drops of essential oil on a tissue or handkerchief and keep it with you to sniff throughout the day. Scented beauty products, such as shampoos or lotions, also do the trick. And you can always pull a Granny Smith from the fridge or uncap the bottle of vanilla in your pantry.

The World Database of Happiness says the 10 happiest places on earth are:
Costa Rica • Denmark
Puerto Rico • Iceland
Switzerland • Canada
Finland • Mexico
Norway • Sweden
Unfortunately, there's no data on how they smell.

I RESOLVE TO

DEVOUR DELICIOUS BOOKS

Bite into a literary trend that lets you dish and dish. Gather friends to discuss food-themed novels, and then prepare the foods they feature. It's just one more way to love a good book. "An author's recipes take readers deeper into the story," says Judy Gelman, of **bookclubcookbook.com**. "And there's the added pleasure of eating." Begin the feast with these five favorites, *at right*.

Julie Hyzy's ***Affairs of Steak***. Hail to the chef—who must solve White House slayings while catering a presidential bash.

Brian O'Reilly's ***Angelina's Bachelors***, a buzzed-about debut, serves up a widow pouring her grief into cooking and finding food's healing powers.

Diane Mott Davidson's ***Crunch Time*** puts Colorado caterer and savvy super-sleuth Goldy Schulz on the scent of a killer who's framed a fellow chef.

Jael McHenry's ***The Kitchen Daughter*** stirs up secrets and ghosts through her family fare.

Sarah Pinneo's ***Julia's Child*** whips up a hilarious—and sometimes scary—fantasy about a mommy turned organic chef for discerning toddlers.

MAKE FRESH SPRING ROLLS

These straightforward how-to's—and a brilliantly simple filling of salad fixings plus cooked shrimp—are all you need to roll your own. See *page 106* for another spring roll recipe.

Rolling Along Add a few fresh whole mint or cilantro leaves or drizzle with purchased peanut sauce before wrapping it all up.

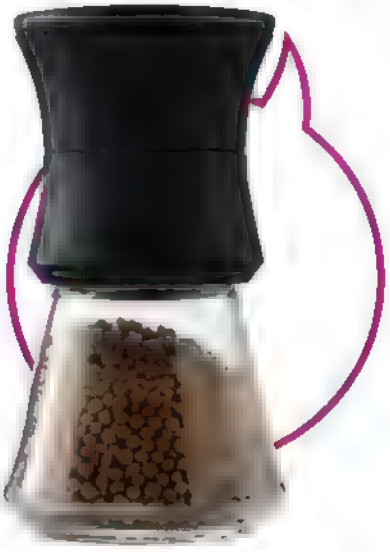
1. Soak spring roll wrapper in cool water for 1 minute. Place wrapper in front of you so it's in a diamond position. Spoon 1 Tbsp. of filling near the bottom corner of the wrapper.
2. Fold bottom corner of wrapper over filling and press down gently. Fold left and right corners in toward the center (it should resemble an envelope) and gently press to seal. Continue rolling up with a tuck and roll not on to the top of the wrapper and gently press to seal.

Tip *When working with spring roll wrappers, keep them covered with a damp towel to keep edges from drying out.*

THINK OUTSIDE THE (RECIPE) BOX

Step outside your culinary comfort zone with Chicago's Graham Elliot, *right*, one of the judges on Fox's hit TV show *MasterChef*. His top tips:

- Get the full flavor experience from spices by using the whole version, especially coriander, fennel seeds, nutmeg and cloves. Toast and grind them as needed to bring out their nuances.
- Set yourself up for success with a well-stocked pantry. For depth and balance, keep a variety of acids (vinegar, verjus, citrus juices), oils (canola, grapeseed, sesame, high-end finishing olive oils), sweeteners (honey, agave nectar, maple syrup), salts (kosher, smoked, finishing sea salts) and whole peppercorns (black, pink, green).
- Read *The Flavor Bible* by Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg (Little, Brown and Co.). It's a great reference for cooks of all abilities.
- Season water before you blanch vegetables.
- Use good equipment. I recommend a chef's knife, a high-heat-resistant rubber spatula, a Microplane grater, a Japanese mandoline, a high-speed blender, a coffee grinder for spices and a good peeler.
- Add pizzazz to a soup by placing some of the ingredients artfully in a bowl and then ladling the soup on top. For instance, with clam chowder, place diced potatoes, crispy bacon bits, celery leaves and creme fraiche in the bowls. Then pour the chowder over the top for dramatic effect.
- Make sure your pan is hot when searing a piece of protein (meat, poultry, seafood).



Release the Flavor Grind whole spices, salt, pepper and even flaxseed in this sharp gadget. Its wide-mouth jar makes using it a breeze. William Bounds Universal Spice Mill, **bedbathandbeyond.com**. *$15*

Exotic Worlds A click of your mouse brings you spices galore. The Spice House searches the globe for high-quality, hand-selected spices. **spicehouse.com**. *$2-7*

The Spice Is Right Shake a richer, more aromatic flavor onto food with McCormick Roasted Spices in ground cumin, coriander, ginger and cinnamon. **mccormick.com**. *Prices vary.*

PHOTO GREG GAYNE/FOX/REVEILLE (GRAHAM ELLIOT)

Curry Roasted Potatoes

These savory potatoes are perfect for cooks who want to experiment w th a few new spices and flavors.
—**BRYAN KENNEDY** KANEOHE, HAWAII

PREP: 20 M N • **BAKE:** 20 M N
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS (1 CUP SAUCE)

- **6 cardamom pods**
- **½ tsp. whole cloves**
- **2 tsp. each fennel, cumin, coriander and mustard seeds**
- **2 tsp. ground turmeric**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **¼ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **2 Tbsp. canola oil**
- **4 medium red potatoes, cut into ½-in. slices**

MINT YOGURT SAUCE

- **1 cup reduced-fat plain yogurt**
- **¼ cup minced fresh mint**

1. Remove seeds from cardamom pods In a small dry skillet over medium heat, toast the cloves and the fennel, cumin, coriander, mustard and cardamom seeds until aromatic, about 1-2 minutes. Cool.
2. Transfer to a spice grinder or a mortar and pestle (in batches if necessary); grind until mixture becomes a powder. Stir in the turmeric, salt and cayenne.
3. In a large bowl, combine oil and spice mixture. Add potatoes; toss to coat. Arrange in a single layer in an ungreased 15-in. x10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 425° for 16-20 minutes or until golden brown, turning once.
4. Meanwhile, combine yogurt and mint in a small bowl. Serve with potatoes.

Expand My Repertoire

Most home cooks fall into a cycle of tried-and-true meals. If you're craving more, spicing up your standard selection of recipes is easier than you think. Turn to the *Taste of Home* app. It delivers thousands of recipes to your Android or iPhone, so you can plan and shop for tasty meals even while you're on the go.
tasteofhome.com/mobile

A Whole New World Thanks to a medley of aromatic spices, everyday potatoes become attention-getting dippers.

Stir Up the **Best Soup Ever**

For great soup, start with the basics. This top pick from *tasteofhome.com* is so good, our test kitchen experts still recall the first time they tried it.

Cook Seasonally A soup built around fresh ingredients is sure to shine, and some of the best versions are created with leftover bits of this and that. Toss in vegetables, cubes of last night's ham and whatever herbs appeal to you. Even rinds from hard cheeses, such as Parmesan, lend richness.

Start with Quality Broth From-scratch broth, made by slowly cooking bones or vegetables in a pot of water, produces unparalleled flavor. If you don't have the time (or the bones), simply add fresh or dried herbs and spices to purchased broth.

Bring Out the Flavors Give veggies, herbs, spices and meats some time in a skillet with a bit of butter, olive oil or bacon grease to deepen flavors.

Layer It On Once the broth is bubbling and loaded with sauteed ingredients, add beans, rice or potatoes, ingredients that require time in a hot pot to soften.

Neighborhood Bean Soup

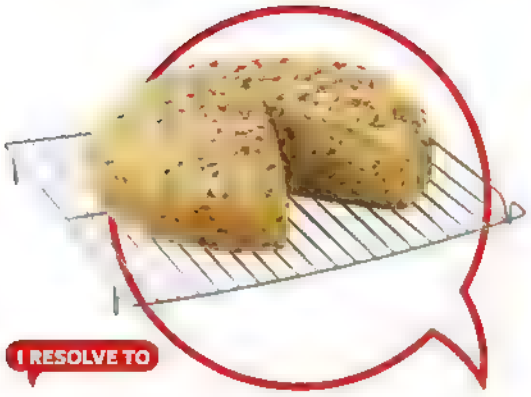
Few things provide the same comfort as a steaming bowl of homemade soup. The ingredients in this one may sound simple and homespun, but the results will bowl you over.
—**CHERYL TROWBRIDGE** WINDSOR, ONTARIO

PREP: 30 MIN. + STANDING • **COOK:** 3 HOURS • **YIELD:** 10 SERVINGS

- **2 cups dried great northern beans**
- **5 cups chicken broth**
- **3 cups water**
- **1 meaty ham bone or 2 smoked ham hocks**
- **2 to 3 Tbsp. chicken bouillon granules**
- **1 tsp. dried thyme**
- **½ tsp. dried marjoram**
- **½ tsp. pepper**
- **¼ tsp. rubbed sage**
- **¼ tsp. dried savory**
- **2 medium onions, chopped**
- **3 medium carrots, chopped**
- **3 celery ribs, chopped**
- **1 Tbsp. canola oil**

1. Place beans in a Dutch oven or soup kettle; add water to cover by 2 in. Bring to a boil; boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; cover and let stand for 1 hour. Drain.
2. Add broth, water, ham bone, bouillon and seasonings; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 2 hours.
3. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, saute the onions, carrots and celery in oil until tender; add to soup. Cover and simmer 1 hour longer.
4. Remove ham bone; cool slightly. When cool enough to handle, remove meat from bone and cut into chunks; return to soup. Discard bone. Skim fat from soup.

Extra, Extra! Feed the neighbors or save leftovers of this big-batch soup for lunch.



I RESOLVE TO

Bake More Bread

From-scratch flavor and smell, little work required. Seriously, aromatically irresistible.

No-Knead Harvest Bread

—CARSYN MOODY FLINT, MICHIGAN

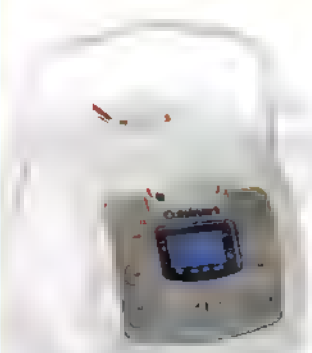
PREP: 30 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 30 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 1 LOAF (16 SLICES)

- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- ⅓ cup cornmeal
- ⅓ cup assorted seeds, such as sesame seeds, flaxseed, sunflower kernels and/or poppy seeds, divided
- 1¾ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. active dry yeast
- 3 cups bread flour, divided
- 2¼ cups cool water (55° to 65°)
- 2 Tbsp. molasses
- Additional cornmeal

1. In a large bowl, combine the whole wheat flour, cornmeal, ⅓ cup seeds, salt, yeast and 2½ cups of the bread flour. Stir in the water and the molasses until blended; the dough will be wet and sticky.
2. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature until more than doubled in size and bubbles are present on surface, 12 to 18 hours.
3. Stir in remaining bread flour. Cover again with plastic wrap; let rise 2 hours longer.
4. Lightly oil an oven-safe 5-qt. round Dutch oven; cover and place in oven. Preheat oven to 425°. Carefully remove hot Dutch oven; sprinkle bottom with cornmeal. With a spatula, transfer dough to Dutch oven. Sprinkle with remaining seeds. Cover and bake for 20 minutes
5. Uncover; bake 15-20 minutes longer or until deep golden brown and bread sounds hollow when center is tapped. Remove from pan to a wire rack. Bread may also be prepared in a clay bread baker; prepare the baker according to manufacturer's directions and proceed as directed.

MASTER THE RICE COOKER

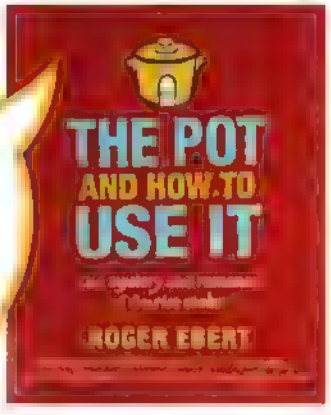
Rice cookers don't just make perfect rice every time—they make perfect rice while also steaming veggies and cooking up a batch of soup, stew or rice pudding. The *Taste of Home* Test Kitchen put several rice cookers through the paces and proclaimed these our favorites.



Cuisinart Rice Plus Multi-Cooker This model, which features programmed settings for various types of rice, oatmeal, soup and more, makes precisely prepared foods a no-brainer. A built-in sensor registers cooking fluctuations and allows for adjustments. **cuisinart.com**. *$100*

Zojirushi Induction Heating System Rice Cooker and Warmer Induction heating technology is the secret to this machine's targeted temperature adjustments. Translation: flawless, fluffy rice, no matter what. Its keep-warm settings mean you don't have to rush to the table the minute cooking stops. **macys.com**. *$160*

Movie critic Roger Ebert's ode to the rice cooker was a blog entry that blossomed into a book. *The Pot and How to Use It* includes essays, some recipes and even a few limericks. Ebert so loves his rice cooker, he smuggled it into his room at the Sundance Film Festival



I RESOLVE TO

GO SLOW

The slow cooker is the most popular small appliance in the country, but sometimes we stash it away and forget about it. Here are a couple of reasons to pull it out again—a brisket perfect for weeknights (see *below right*) and a no-watch dessert that releases a cinnamon fragrance throughout your kitchen.

Special Occasion
Desserts are easy when you can ignore them as they cook.

Butterscotch Pears

This grand finale simmers during dinner and impresses as soon as you bring it to the table. Serve as is, or with vanilla ice cream and a slice of pound cake. Leftover pear nectar is heavenly when added to sparkling wine or enjoyed on ice with breakfast.
—THERESA KREYCHE TUSTIN, CALIFORNIA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **COOK:** 2 HOURS
YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- **4 large firm pears**
- **1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- **¼ cup packed brown sugar**
- **3 Tbsp. butter, softened**
- **2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour**
- **½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **¼ tsp. salt**
- **½ cup chopped pecans**
- **½ cup pear nectar**
- **2 Tbsp. honey**

1. Cut pears in half lengthwise; remove cores. Brush pears with lemon juice. In a small bowl, combine the brown sugar, butter, flour, cinnamon and salt; stir in pecans. Spoon into pears; place in 4-qt. slow cooker.
2. Combine pear nectar and honey; drizzle over pears. Cover and cook on low for 2-3 hours or until heated through. Serve warm.

With 8 hours of cook time, this

Tips for Slow-Cooked Greatness

- To cook food properly and safely, fill your slow cooker at least halfway but not more than two-thirds full.
- Save on morning prep by placing all of the ingredients in the crock the night before. Then cover and refrigerate. In the morning, simply place the crock in the slow cooker, turn it on and go!
- Don't open the lid to stir during cooking. Each time you do, you increase the cooking time by 20 to 30 minutes.

I RESOLVE TO

Prepare More Home-Cooked Meals

Holding this magazine gets you halfway there. Next step? Pick three to six recipes and start cooking. You'll also find you cook more when those around you cook more. So we're offering a one-year gift subscription to *Taste of Home* magazine for your family and friends for just $10 (new subscriptions only). Find more information at **tasteofhome.com/givegifts** or call 800-344-6913 (mention key code WLK11T). ■

PHOTOS: PATRICIA GRANLUND; STYLIST: CAROLYN PARKER

close to home

CELEBRATING the PEOPLE around the *Taste of Home* table

Tidings of Casserole and Joy

There's **only one thing to do** when a holiday potluck doesn't go as planned—embrace it.

BY MELODY WARNICK | ILLUSTRATION BY ANNIKA HUETT

After seven years of hosting a Christmas Eve brunch for friends and neighbors, my husband and I have the preliminaries down cold. First there's the creation of the holiday music playlist; then the wrapping of white elephant gifts; last the placing of breakables out of reach of rambunctious children.

The only thing I leave to serendipity is the food. Because it's a potluck, and rigid marching orders feel too demanding for The Most Wonderful Time of the Year, I make vague assignments along the lines of "Bring your favorite dish." Whether that means pumpkin muffins or sausage pinwheels, we never know until guests show up, platters in hand, what we'll be eating and that's part of the fun. No matter what arrives, it's always devoured.

Last year, my own contribution was a breakfast casserole—an easy mixture of eggs, bread, cheese and sausage. On the morning of December 24th, I tucked two pans of it into the oven and enjoyed the scent of sage and melting cheddar as I set up chairs and lit the Christmas tree.

The casseroles were still in the oven when the first guests arrived. "Merry Christmas!" I exclaimed, throwing open the door to my neighbors Carrie and Jeff. Their two teenage sons headed for the kitchen, clutching 9-by-13 pans between red oven mitts. "What's that?" I asked, angling for a peek under the foil. Something smelled disconcertingly familiar.

"Breakfast casserole!" the boys chimed

"We've had this every Christmas since I can remember," said Carrie's daughter, Brittany. "Everyone loves it." And with that I sidled over to the oven, clicked it off and pretended that my own casseroles never existed.

Hours later, after the party wound down, I peered into the oven at my sad and shriveled casseroles. They were clearly beyond saving. I dumped them unceremoniously into the trash.

Looking back, I'm glad I didn't try to pit my food against Carrie's in a dueling casserole kind of way. It wouldn't have held true to the goodwill-to-all-men holiday spirit that should be the guiding principle of the season. And you know, her casserole was delicious: fluffy and, as predicted, quickly devoured.

Nevertheless, for this year's brunch, I think I'll institute just one layer of specificity in the food assignments: Carrie can bring the breakfast casserole. ■

Melody Warnick is a freelance writer whose work appears in a variety of other national magazines. She usually stays on the safe side of potlucks by bringing a dessert.

SHARE YOUR STORY Do you have a heartwarming kitchen memory or a funny tale about family and food? We'd love to hear it. Send it to **editors@tasteofhome.com.**

Full-Circle Food

A **hardworking mother's gift** of cooking comforting meals inspires her now-grown daughter to do the same. | RECIPES & STORY BY **BRYNN RADER**

Cornmeal Dinner Rolls, *page 96*

Chicken and Sweet Potato Chili

taste TESTED

Use the whole chicken instead of boneless, skinless breasts for the most flavor. If you like things spicy, add an extra jalapeno pepper.

I am always amazed when I think back to how hard my mom worked when my younger brothers and I were growing up. She made sure we had a home-cooked family meal every night, and she always served it with love.

It was easier for her when I was in elementary school and she didn't work outside the house. But then we moved to the Midwest and she had to work full time. She'd waitress all day, and then come home and be just as hospitable to us as she was to her customers. She'd serve everyone else and insist on serving herself last.

When I was a teenager, she started working crazy hours. Taking a job as a certified nurse assistant, she'd pull herself out of bed at 5 a.m. so she could be home for us after school. As a kid, you don't think much about the sacrifices your parents make, but you begin to appreciate them more as you get older.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Now that I'm a stay-at-home mom with children of my own (9-year-old daughter Raven and 2-year-old son Atelic), I truly understand how hard she worked. My mom lives about 15 minutes away from me and my family. Even though she still works hard, we get to see her frequently. She lends me her *Taste of Home* magazines, and I use them to plan my family's weekly menu.

I make my mom's recipes, too. Chicken and Sweet Potato Chili is one of her newer creations. It reminds me of the comfort food I loved so much growing up. We like the twist of swapping in chicken for the more traditional beef, and our family has always been partial to sweet potatoes. My kids have food intolerances, but even they can enjoy the chili.

My mom also used to make us cornmeal dinner rolls regularly. They're especially great because they go with just about anything. We always looked forward to them and dived right in as soon as they hit the table.

And my mother definitely passed her sweet tooth on to us! She's awesome at baking sugar cookies and has an amazing cookie cutter collection. She also makes this Maple Nut Twist, *page 96*, which is so pretty and company-worthy. She'd serve it when my parents played cards, and my brothers and I would squabble over the center piece, which was the softest, most buttery part.

My mom has always made everyday moments special with food, and I do it now as a mother myself. It feels like a gift she's given me, and I'm happy that I can pass it on to my own children.

Like Mother, Like Daughter Brynn Rader inherited a love of cooking from her mother, Michele Neville. The two now swap recipes and cooking tips.

WHAT'S YOUR MOM'S BEST? Tell us about your mom and her greatest dishes. Email information and recipes to **editors@tasteofhome.com**. If your story is selected, you'll earn $100.

Chicken and Sweet Potato Chili

Enjoy this comforting chili on its own, but it's wonderful spooned over a bed of steamed rice or an extra helping of protein-packed quinoa.

PREP: 35 MIN. • **COOK:** 1½ HOURS
YIELD: 10 SERVINGS (3½ QT.)

- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 whole garlic bulb, cloves separated, peeled and minced**
- **2 Tbsp. olive oil**
- **1 broiler/fryer chicken (3 to 4 lbs.), cut up**
- **2 cans (14½ oz. each) plus 1½ cups chicken broth, divided**
- **1 Tbsp. chili powder**
- **¾ tsp. salt**
- **¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**
- **¼ tsp. pepper**
- **½ cup quinoa, rinsed**
- **3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed**
- **2 cans (15 oz. each) black beans, rinsed and drained**
- **2 cans (16 oz. each) kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (14½ oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained**

1. In a Dutch oven, saute onion and garlic in oil until tender. Add chicken, 2 cans broth and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour or until chicken is tender.

2. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, bring remaining broth to a boil. Add quinoa. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Remove from the heat; fluff with a fork. Set aside.

3. Remove chicken; cool slightly. Strain broth, reserving vegetables; skim fat from broth. Return vegetables and broth to the Dutch oven; add the sweet potatoes, beans, tomatoes and cooked quinoa. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer for 15-20 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

4. Meanwhile, remove chicken from bones; cut into bite-size pieces. Discard bones. Stir chicken into chili, heat through.

Editor's Note: *Look for quinoa in the cereal, rice or organic food aisle.*

Cornmeal Dinner Rolls

A flavorful sidekick to chili, soups and stews, these rolls can also stand alone with a simple pat of butter and drizzle of honey. To keep them warm, set them in a basket lined with a towel.

PREP: 35 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 15 MIN.
YIELD: 2½ DOZEN

- **2 cups whole milk**
- **½ cup sugar**
- **½ cup butter, cubed**
- **½ cup cornmeal**
- **1¼ tsp. salt**
- **1 pkg. (¼ oz.) active dry yeast**
- **¼ cup warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **2 eggs**
- **4¾ to 5¾ cups all-purpose flour**

TOPPING

- **2 Tbsp. butter, melted**
- **1 Tbsp. cornmeal**

1. In a large saucepan, combine the milk, sugar, butter, cornmeal and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 5-8 minutes or until thickened. Cool to 110°-115°.
2. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm water. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, cornmeal mixture, yeast mixture and 2 cups flour; beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough (dough will be sticky).
3. Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.
4. Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; divide into 30 balls. Place 2 in. apart on greased baking sheets. Cover with a clean kitchen towel; let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes.
5. Uncover rolls; brush with melted butter and sprinkle with cornmeal. Bake at 375° for 13-17 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pans to wire racks; serve warm.

Maple Nut Twist

This treat is packed with warm cinnamon and brown sugar, so it's easy to see why my family loves it. Sweet, satisfying, light and tender, it's a staple during the holidays.

PREP: 55 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 20 MIN.
YIELD: 16 SERVINGS

- **1 pkg. (16 oz.) hot roll mix**
- **3 Tbsp. sugar**
- **¾ cup warm water (120° to 130°)**
- **⅓ cup butter, melted**
- **1 egg, lightly beaten**
- **1 tsp. maple flavoring**

FILLING

- **1¼ cups finely chopped walnuts**
- **¾ cup packed brown sugar**
- **¾ cup sugar**
- **3 tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **3 tsp. maple flavoring**
- **⅓ cup butter, melted**

1. In a large bowl, combine the contents of the roll mix and yeast packets with the sugar. Stir in the water, butter, egg and maple flavoring; mix well.
2. Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.
3. Combine the first five filling ingredients in a small bowl; set aside. Punch dough down. Turn onto lightly floured surface; divide into thirds.
4. Roll one portion of the dough into a 12-in. circle; transfer to a greased 12 in. pizza pan. Brush with a third of the butter; sprinkle with a third of the filling. Repeat twice with remaining dough, butter and filling, placing each circle of dough over the previous layer. Pinch outer edges to seal.
5. Place a small glass at the center of the dough. With scissors, cut from the outside edge to the glass to form 16 wedges. Remove glass; twist each wedge three times. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 30 minutes.
6. Uncover dough. Bake at 375° for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pan to a wire rack. ■

taste of home MEXICO

A CULINARY VACATION

JANUARY 4 - 8, 2012

Join Taste of Home as we take our cooking school on the road to the beautiful Riviera Maya, Mexico! The Taste of Home Cooking School, Funjet Vacations and the luxurious El Dorado Royale, a Spa Resort, by Karisma, are partnering for our first tropical four-night/five-day cooking school getaway!

The Taste of Home team of Culinary Specialists will work side-by-side with the internationally trained executive chefs from El Dorado Royale teaching the techniques and recipes of Mexican cuisine. In the luxury of the Gourmet Inclusive®, AAA Four Diamond Resort, you'll find yourself surrounded by more than a mile of sandy beach and exciting nightlife, serving as the perfect additional ingredients.

It's time you did something special for yourself...and your taste buds. For more details on this exclusive culinary getaway to the Riviera Maya, visit www.funjet.com/tasteofhome.

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Funjet Vacations
DO SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

THE SEASON FOR GIVING BACK

There are so many ways to use your culinary skills to give back in your community. Start here.

BY CHRISTINE HOFMANN-BOURQUE

Come December, there are two places you're most likely to find Marla Fisher: out holiday shopping or in her kitchen. The time shopping is for her two young sons. The time cooking is spent making a Christmas turkey for the adopt-a-family program at her church, baking desserts for an Air Force fundraiser, or organizing meal donations for brand-new moms in her Texas neighborhood. "I'm from the South," says Mississippi born Marla. "We find comfort in food. When someone's in need, you surround them with food."

While Marla doesn't have traditional elves at her beck and call, she does have two high-tech helpers at the ready the sites **signupgenius.com** and **carecalendar.org**. These free services simplify planning for volunteers by showing event meal calendars and bake sales and letting participants sign up on line while viewing real-time updates on which time slots need filling.

"It streamlines things," says Marla, whose go-to meal donations include Cheesy Crescent Casserole and Chicken Spaghetti. "People want to be helpful."

Find eight more ways to be kind to your community, *at right.* ■

Giving Season For Marla Fisher, sharing is caring.

Cook dinner for the homeless and hungry. Shelters and soup kitchens rely on volunteers to cook and serve holiday meals. At California's Los Angeles Mission (**losangelesmission.org**), more than 3,000 homeless people show up on Christmas Eve for hot meals dished up by volunteers. Contact a homeless shelter or soup kitchen in your area to sign up.

Host a charitable pie competition. Organize a pie bake-off in your neighborhood, kids' school, church or synagogue. Charge $10 for each pie or a $1 tasting fee. Donate the money to a food bank or pantry. Find one near you at **feedingamerica.org**.

Surprise an elderly neighbor. Pack a dozen cookies in a festive holiday tin for a thoughtful treat. Bake cookies without nuts if you're not sure if your neighbor's allergic.

> When someone's in need, you surround them with food.

Request canned food at bake sales. Instead of money, ask for nonperishable food, says Bethany Prange of the St. Louis Area Foodbank in Missouri. A plate of brownies could be four cans of food. For tips on running a food drive, visit Greater Boston Food Bank's site, **gbfb.org**.

Drive away hunger with Meals on Wheels. Volunteers are needed to prepare and deliver meals to seniors at the holidays and all year round. Search for a location near you at the Meals on Wheels Association of America website, **mowaa.org**.

Donate kosher food for Hanukkah. Across the country, kosher food banks such as Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill Food Pantry (**sqfoodpantry.org**) and Florida's JCS Kosher Food Bank (**jcsfl.org**) run low on foods to help people in need who keep kosher homes. Ask synagogue leaders for programs in your area.

Welcome a new neighbor. In military communities, families are constantly coming and going, even during the holidays. Drop off a casserole or dessert to welcome newcomers. Because plates and utensils are often packed away, bring along the disposable type.

Head into the fields. Volunteer for the Food Forward gleaning program (**foodforward.org**), which picks produce from private gardens and public spaces. Last January, the Los Angeles based group harvested 805 pounds of oranges from one tree to feed the hungry. Many food banks offer gleaning opportunities.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Track down volunteer or donation opportunities in your area with the help of these sites.

- **volunteermatch.org**
- **handsonnetwork.org**
- **dosomething.org**
- **greatnonprofits.org**

And remember that many good works are done by small groups of people without websites or formal names. Look for "help needed" fliers tacked on bulletin boards at local places of worship, grocery store entrances and community gathering places such as the YMCA or Salvation Army.

Together at Long Last

DATE NIGHT

Don't let the demands of the season overshadow the need to be a couple. These **perfect-for-a-pair** seared scallops with a **super-quick pan sauce and creamy risotto** yield romantic-restaurant-like results with minimal effort and maximum together time.

Seared Scallops with Citrus Herb Sauce

For a perfect sear, gently blot scallops with a paper towel to remove moisture before adding them to the skillet.
—**APRIL LANE** GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN.
YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

- ¾ lb. sea scallops
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ⅛ tsp. paprika
- 3 Tbsp. butter, divided
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 Tbsp. dry sherry or chicken broth
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- ⅛ tsp. minced fresh oregano
- ⅛ tsp. minced fresh tarragon

1. Pat scallops dry; sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbsp. butter over medium-high heat. Add scallops; sear for 1-2 minutes on each side or until golden brown and firm. Remove from skillet; keep warm.
2. Wipe skillet clean. Saute garlic in remaining butter until tender; stir in sherry. Cook until liquid is almost evaporated; stir in remaining ingredients. Serve with scallops.

Wine Pairing

Raise a glass to romance and round out this special meal with a crisp white suggests Betsy D. Ross, Boston Harbor Hotel's wine director and sommelier for its renowned restaurant, Meritage. Elk Cove Pinot Gris, *$15*, is a smart and affordable choice. "**Its bright citrus and grapefruit notes pair wonderfully with scallops**," says Betsy. Or give Mer Soleil Silver Chardonnay, *$30*, a try. "Its texture and flavor will accent the scallops' sauce and balance the risotto's earthiness."

Shiitake & Butternut Risotto

Many cooks call risotto a labor of love because it requires constant stirring to reach its signature creamy consistency. You'll be convinced in one bite that it's well worth the effort.
—**STEPHANIE CAMPBELL** ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA

PREP: 25 MIN. • **COOK:** 25 MIN.
YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

- 1 cup cubed peeled butternut squash
- 2 tsp. olive oil, divided
- Dash salt
- 1¼ cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ⅔ cup sliced fresh shiitake mushrooms
- 2 Tbsp. chopped onion
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- ⅓ cup uncooked arborio rice
- Dash pepper
- ¼ cup white wine or ¼ cup additional reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp. minced fresh sage

1. Place squash in a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Add 1 tsp. oil and the salt; toss to coat.
2. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally.
3. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, heat broth and keep warm. In a small skillet, saute the mushrooms, onion and garlic in remaining oil for 3-4 minutes or until tender. Add rice and pepper; cook and stir for 2-3 minutes. Reduce heat; stir in wine. Cook and stir until all of the liquid is absorbed.
4. Add the heated broth, ¼ cup at a time, stirring constantly. Allow the liquid to absorb between additions. Cook just until the risotto is creamy and rice is almost tender. (Cooking time is about 20 minutes.) Stir in cheese until melted. Add squash and sage. Serve immediately ■

New *Snacks* for Santa

Sure, he has a **soft spot for cookies**, but even the jolliest of old elves likes variety. This Christmas, jump to the top of the "nice" list with treats made especially for **the modern man in red** (and his reindeer, too). Offer up a traditional cookie or give him the choice of a savory nibble to fuel him through a night of endless up-and-down **climbs through chimneys**.

Fresh Face St. Nick is more than 1,750 years old, for heaven's sake; give the man an alternative to milk and cookies.

Ranch Spread Snowman

Get the kids in on the act and have them gussy up this cheerful guy with pretzels and colorful vegetables.

—SHERRY AL-TAMIMI
SUGAR VALLEY, GEORGIA

PREP: 20 MIN. + CHILLING **YIELD:** 2⅔ CUPS

- **2 pkg. (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened**
- **½ cup butter, softened**
- **1 envelope ranch salad dressing mix**
- **1 Tbsp. spicy brown mustard**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **Assorted decorations: small pitted ripe olives, pretzel sticks and sweet red and/or orange pepper**
- **Assorted crackers and fresh vegetables**

1. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until smooth. Add the dressing mix, mustard and garlic, mix well. Shape into two balls, one slightly larger than the other. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.
2. Remove from the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving. On a serving plate, stack small cheese ball on top of the larger ball to make the body of a snowman.
3. Cut ends from olives to make small circles; attach to snowman for eyes and buttons. Insert pretzel sticks for arms. Cut top hat from pepper; place on top of snowman. Trim pepper to make a nose; insert into face. Serve with crackers and vegetables.

Gingerbread Boy Cookies

Soft and chewy, these cookies have plenty of traditional molasses-ginger flavor. Santa's sure to devour them all.

—DONNA SASSER HINDS
MILWAUKIE, OREGON

PREP: 1 HOUR + CHILLING
BAKE: 10 MIN./BATCH • **YIELD:** 3-4 DOZEN

- **½ cup butter, cubed**
- **½ cup sugar**
- **½ cup molasses**
- **2 tsp. white vinegar**
- **1 egg, lightly beaten**
- **3 cups all-purpose flour**
- **½ tsp. baking soda**
- **½ tsp. ground ginger**
- **½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **¼ tsp. salt**
- **Decorating icing, nonpareils, Red Hots or candies of your choice, optional**

1. In a saucepan, combine the butter, sugar, molasses and vinegar; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; cool to lukewarm. Stir in egg. Combine flour, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon and salt; stir into molasses mixture to form a soft dough.
2. Divide dough into thirds. Shape each portion into a disk; wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or until easy to handle.
3. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough to ¼-in. thickness. Cut with a floured 3-in. gingerbread boy cookie cutter. Place on greased baking sheets. Bake at 375° for 7-9 minutes or until edges are firm. Remove to wire racks and let cool completely. Decorate as desired. ■

cookies across america
allrecipes.com tasteofhome NESTLÉ TOLL HOUSE

Cookie lovers unite!

It's a cookie fest! If you love baking cookies for the holidays, gathering with friends and family and sharing with others, join *Taste of Home*, **allrecipes.com** and NESTLÉ® TOLL HOUSE® on December 10 to spread Christmas cheer. To learn more about Cookies Across America or to participate, visit **facebook.com/cookiesacrossamerica**. Or get started by trying the Cookies Across America recipe for Gingerbread Boys that you see here, at *left*. Then share the joy.

MORE ONLINE
For this issue's coloring book page, go to **tasteofhome.com/kids**.

Kyleigh Rodefer, 14 months

Ellee Garrett, 4

Brookelyn Bates, 3

More of Santa's Favorites

Even the youngest *TOH* readers know that Santa appreciates a little variety in his snacks as he circles the globe. Here's what a few of them told us:

- My daddy says Santa likes burgers and fries with extra ketchup and a side of pickles.
- Mommy tells us to leave Santa chocolate and a spoon for the ice cream in the freezer.
- We leave him cookies and a note saying to help himself to whatever's in the fridge.

Southern Black-Eyed Peas

New Year's Eats

Want a **blessedly good 2012**? Try feasting on this **traditional good-luck fare** to start off the year. | BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN

Michael and Jane Stern, traveling food writers with more than 40 books under their belts, rove the country for great eats. Find more at **roadfood.com.**

A Champagne toast is the commonly accepted way to ring in a new year, but we're more interested in what there is to eat. Celebratory dining on December 31st and January 1st is different almost everywhere you go, ranging from Japanese mochi (rice cake)—a simple snack enjoyed in Hawaii—to the flabbergasting New Year's Eve all-you-can-eat banquet and gospel concert south of Indianapolis at the largest cafeteria on earth, Jonathan Byrd's. Tradition minded Greek and Turkish families include pomegranates on the New Year's menu because they symbolize fertility. Other cultures focus on fish because they travel in large schools, thus heralding a year of plenty.

LONG NOODLES, LONGER LIFE

Those of Asian heritage might pay respect to their culture by eating long noodles on the first day of the year, taking care not to let them tear, as their length foretells longevity After fireworks on December 31st, traditional Italians celebrate the Feast of San Silvestro, the menu for which features lentils (which represent prosperity, because they look like itty-bitty coins) and luscious cotecchino sausage to invite fat times ahead. New York's great Italian restaurant Babbo makes extraordinary cotecchino from fresh pork, and suggests it as one of the multiple kinds of meat on a plate of bollito misto (boiled dinner)—a New Year's feast if ever there was one.

AN ADAGE ABOUT CABBAGE

The old German belief that eating pork and sauerkraut on New Year's Eve will ensure a bountiful future comes into play when everyone at the table wishes one another as much good fortune as there are shreds of cabbage in the pot. Families around the country continue the custom, but it's especially common in Pennsylvania Dutch country. Our favorite version is in Milwaukee, at the venerable Karl Ratzsch's, where you can ease your knife into a dressing-stuffed pork chop sided by applesauce, spaetzle dumplings and the kitchen's magnificent kraut.

People in the Netherlands welcome the New Year by eating oliebollen, sugar-dusted fritters filled with apples and raisins. In the small town of Pella, Iowa, known for its annual tulip festival, the Jaarsma Bakery celebrates tulip week at the beginning of May by making oliebollen and "Dutch letters," which are buttery, S-shaped pastries filled with almond paste

If you're looking for a lucky year in the American South, especially in the Carolina low country, try hoppin' John: black-eyed peas and rice with sausage or salt pork, and cornbread on the side. Folklore says to toss in a dime and that the person whose serving contains the coin will be especially lucky. And if you add greens to the recipe, eaters can expect a year full of money. Also, for a really bright future, leave three uneaten peas on the plate—one each for romance, luck and fortune.

As for New Year's Day, nearly everyone has a favorite pick-me-up. Among the most potent are menudo, a peppery tripe and hominy stew served in the Southwest, and ya-ka-mein, a cross-cultural Asian/soul food concoction of spaghetti in spicy broth topped with shredded beef, green onion and half a hard-boiled egg. Around New Orleans, ya-ka-mein is known as Old Sober.

PHOTO: TODD FRANCE (M. CHAEL AND JANE STERN)

Southern Black-Eyed Peas

Pork is the secret ingredient in good black-eyed peas. This recipe features a double dose of ham for flavor, plus low and gentle cooking, which makes it a side dish to celebrate
—**DOTY EMORY** JASPER, GEORGIA

PREP: 20 MIN. + STANDING
COOK: 45 MIN. • **YIELD:** 6 SERVINGS

- **1 lb. dried black-eyed peas, sorted and rinsed**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **2 Tbsp. olive oil**
- **2 oz. sliced salt pork belly, chopped**
- **6 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 bay leaves**
- **1 Tbsp. minced fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried thyme**
- **¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**
- **¼ tsp. pepper**
- **1 carton (32 oz.) reduced-sodium chicken broth**
- **2 smoked ham hocks**

1. Place peas in a Dutch oven; add water to cover by 2 in. Bring to a boil; boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; cover and let stand for 1 hour. Drain and rinse peas, discarding liquid; set aside.
2. In the same pan, saute onion in oil until tender. Add the pork belly, garlic, bay leaves, thyme, pepper flakes and pepper; cook 1 minute longer.
3. Add the broth, ham hocks and peas; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 35-40 minutes or until peas are tender, stirring occasionally and adding additional water if desired.
4. Discard bay leaves. Remove ham hocks; cool slightly. Remove meat from bones if desired; finely chop and return to pan. Discard bones.

The Roadfood Guide to a Lucky New Year

Babbo 110 Waverly Place, New York City, 212-777-0303. **babbonyc.com**
Jaarsma Bakery 727 Franklin St., Pella, Iowa, 641-628-2940. **jaarsmabakery.com**
Jonathan Byrd's Cafeteria 100 Byrd Way, Greenwood, Indiana, 317-881-8888 **jonathanbyrds.com**
Karl Ratzsch's 320 E. Mason St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 414-276-2720 **karlratzsch.com**

Sunday Supper Sandwiches

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Start this hearty dish in the oven and then ignore it while you focus on your other New Year's preparations.
—**LIBBY WALP** CHICAGO

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 2½ HOURS
YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- **1 can (14 oz.) sauerkraut, rinsed and well drained**
- **1 boneless pork shoulder butt roast (2½ to 3 lbs.)**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **¼ tsp. pepper**
- **¼ cup stone-ground mustard, divided**
- **1 cup apple cider or juice**
- **¼ cup sweetened applesauce**
- **8 slices rye bread, toasted**
- **1 cup (4 oz.) shredded Swiss cheese**

1. Place sauerkraut in an ovenproof Dutch oven. Sprinkle pork with salt and pepper; brush with 2 Tbsp. mustard. Place over sauerkraut. Add cider and applesauce.
2. Cover and bake at 325° for 2½ to 3 hours or until pork is tender. Remove roast; cool slightly. Drain sauerkraut mixture; set aside. Shred pork with two forks.
3. Place toast on an ungreased baking sheet. Spread with remaining mustard. Top with pork, then sauerkraut mixture; sprinkle with cheese. Broil 4-6 in. from the heat for 2-3 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Dutch Letters

These flaky, S-shaped butter pastries are popular from Iowa to the Netherlands.
—**SHIRLEY DE LANGE**
BYRON CENTER, MICHIGAN

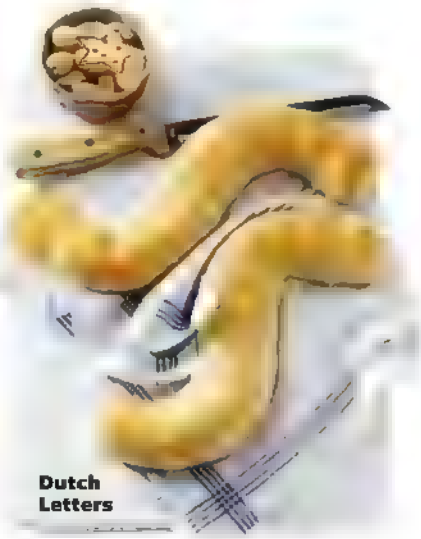
PREP: 50 MIN. • **BAKE:** 30 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 28 PASTRIES

- **1 can (8 oz.) almond paste**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **1 egg**
- **½ tsp. lemon extract**

DOUGH

- **4 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **2 cups cold butter**
- **1 cup ice water**
- **1 egg white**
- **2 tsp. water**

1. In a large bowl, beat the almond paste, sugar, egg and extract until smooth. Divide into four portions. On lightly floured waxed paper, roll each portion into a 12-in. x ½-in. rope; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour and salt; cut in butter until crumbly. Gradually add water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball. Divide into four portions.
3. On a lightly floured surface, roll out each portion into a 14-in. x 6-in. rectangle. Place one almond paste rope in the center of each rectangle. Moisten long edges of dough; fold over filling. Press seam to seal; tuck in ends.
4. Transfer seam side down to greased baking sheets; form each into an S-shape. Whisk egg white and water; brush over dough. Using a fork, prick tops at 1-in. intervals to vent.
5. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on wire racks. To serve, cut into 2-in. pieces. ■



Dutch Letters

Utensils Not Required

Each winter, this Canadian Field Editor warms her house with **friends and family** and keeps spirits bright with **bite-size, hand-held** favorites.

BY LORI STEFANISHION

I was raised in Red Deer, a small city in Alberta, Canada. Whenever my mom would leave my sister and me home alone, the last words out of her mouth were, "Don't touch the stove!" Of course, as soon as she was down the street, we'd run right to the stove.

While I've always liked cooking, what I love even more is entertaining, especially around the holidays. I throw an annual Christmas party for about 100 people. I put up five Christmas trees throughout my house and do up the whole place from top to bottom.

Then comes the decorating party, with the men setting up the trees and the women fluffing out the branches. The appetizers and drinks I serve make it light and happy work. I like to put out a big variety: There are hot dishes, cold dishes and sweet dishes—at least six of each type.

I also try to add a variety of new dishes from time to time—for example, I've got a wonderful smoked fish and hearts of palm appetizer that I'll serve this year.

But there are a few favorites people always ask for, such as my rice paper rolls and an Asian-inspired cheese spread that you can prepare a few hours in advance. Among other hits are Crispy Shrimp Cups, with bake-ahead shells and an easy-to-make filling you can spoon in at the last minute or pipe in using a snipped-off resealable bag. I've included the recipes for all of these here.

I serve appetizers when I host my monthly book club, too. We alternate houses, but the December gathering is always at my home because my friends say it gets them in the Christmas spirit.

Happy-Appy Maker
Someone find her a crown, because Lori Stefanishion may be the queen of appetizers, or "appys," as she sometimes calls them. She lives in the charmingly named hamlet of Rosebud, Alberta, where she devotes most of her spare time to her two granddaughters, 2-year-old Skylar and 10-month-old Gracie.

Asian Cheese Spread

To make this easy recipe even simpler, leave the block of cream cheese whole and let your guests spoon up what they'd like. When making in advance, be sure to cover and refrigerate until serving. If you can't find crystallized ginger, simply substitute ¼ teaspoon ground ginger.

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 15 MIN.
YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- ¼ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. confectioners' sugar
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped crystallized ginger
- 1 Tbsp. thinly sliced green onion
- ⅓ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, cut into 36 cubes
- 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- Rice crackers

In a small bowl, combine the first six ingredients. Add the cream cheese cubes; gently toss to coat. To serve, place cream cheese on rice crackers; sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Crispy Shrimp Cups

Bake wonton cups up to 3 hours in advance, cool and store in a sealed container. Just before serving, fill cups and finish baking. Crabmeat also works well in these cups.

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN.
YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- 24 wonton wrappers
- 1 Tbsp. butter, melted
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- 12 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 4 tsp. honey
- 1 Tbsp. minced fresh parsley
- 2 tsp. hot pepper sauce
- 24 peeled and deveined cooked medium shrimp
- Optional garnishes: lemon slices and fresh basil leaves

1. Press wonton wrappers into greased miniature muffin cups. Combine the butter and garlic powder and brush over edges of wonton wrappers. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned.
2. In a small bowl, beat the cream cheese, honey, minced parsley and hot pepper sauce until blended. Spoon into cups. Bake 5-8 minutes longer or until filling is heated through.
3. Top with shrimp. Serve warm, and, if desired, garnish with lemon slices and basil.

Smoked Trout & Hearts of Palm Bites

I've had great luck finding hearts of palm in the canned vegetable section. In a pinch, use quartered art choke hearts and you'll still get a great dish. Also, I often use smoked salmon instead of smoked trout.

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 25 MIN.
YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- 1 can (14 oz.) hearts of palm, drained
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 24 bagel chips
- 6 oz. smoked trout, broken into 24 portions
- 3 Tbsp. capers, drained

1. Cut hearts of palm widthwise into thin slices. Spread bagel chips with half of the cream cheese and layer with hearts of palm and the trout.
2. Garnish with remaining cream cheese and the capers.

Rice Paper Rolls

I keep packages of rice papers and noodles on hand for quick and easy appetizer ideas. I've used thin and thick rice noodles for these rolls with equal success.

PREP: 40 MIN. • **COOK:** 10 MIN.
YIELD: 1 DOZEN

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tsp. canola oil
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup hoisin sauce
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste

- 4 oz. uncooked thin rice noodles
- 2 tsp. hoisin sauce, optional
- 1 medium sweet red pepper, julienned
- 1 medium cucumber, seeded and julienned
- 1 medium carrot, julienned
- 12 rice papers (8 in.) or spring roll wrappers
- ½ cup dry roasted peanuts, chopped
- ⅓ cup fresh cilantro leaves, optional

1. In a small saucepan, saute the garlic and pepper flakes in oil for 1-2 minutes or until garlic is tender. Add the water, peanut butter, hoisin sauce and tomato paste; cook and stir for 2-4 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat; set aside.
2. For rolls, cook noodles according to package directions. Drain and rinse in cold water; drain well. Add hoisin sauce if desired; toss to coat. In a small bowl, combine the red pepper, cucumber and carrot. Set aside noodles and vegetables.
3. Fill a shallow bowl with water. Soak a rice paper in the water just until pliable, about 5-15 seconds (depending on thickness of rice papers); remove, allowing excess water to drip off.
4. Place on a flat surface. Layer vegetables and noodles down the center; top with peanuts and, if desired, cilantro. Fold both ends over filling; fold one long side over the filling, then roll up tightly. Place seam side down on a serving platter. Repeat with remaining ingredients.
5. Cover with damp paper towels until serving. Cut rolls diagonally in half; serve with peanut sauce. ■

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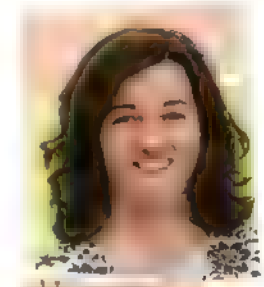

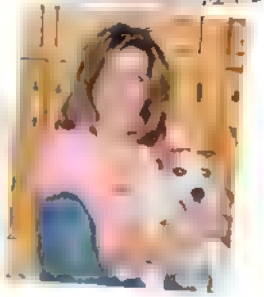

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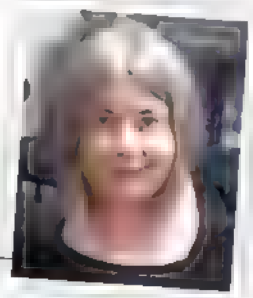
BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

When the temperature drops, how do seasoned Field Editors **Tilara Monroe, Jolie Miller** and **Ronda Abraham** fill their cups of good cheer?

Tilara Monroe
CAMDEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
A state fair ribbon winner who kayaks, travels and shares great food as she goes.

Whether it's spring, summer, fall or winter, I always take vanilla in my coffee. If it's hot cocoa weather, I love to put Heath bar toppings in it. The toffee-chocolate combination makes that cocoa simply delicious. After the 100-plus degrees we had last summer in South Carolina, I'm looking forward to winter and cocoa.

Two coffee toppings jazz up our mornings (or after-dinner drinks): a scoop of ice cream or a shot of hazelnut Torani syrup. With hot herbal tea in winter, I float a thin orange slice or peel on top of passion fruit tea or lemon tea. If I'm drinking apple spice tea, I top it with a cinnamon stick and an orange peel studded with a clove or two. Apple cider is great with cinnamon whipped cream—whip cream as usual, adding dashes of vanilla, maple extract, cinnamon and nutmeg. With hot cocoa, it's whipped cream and a mint. Andes chocolate mints are my favorite.



Jolie Miller
FALLBROOK, CALIFORNIA
An online educator, writer and editor who learned from her great-grandmother the importance of doing what you love.

Ronda Abraham
MILTON, DELAWARE
A court manager and a member of her town council who loves to live with creative spark.

I sometimes add a sprinkle of cinnamon, nutmeg and cocoa to my coffee basket so it blends in with the ground coffee. Try one or all of them for a wonderful fall-winter flavor. I love the taste of chocolate and peanut butter, so into a cup of hot cocoa I'll swirl about a half teaspoon of creamy peanut butter. You can also top it off with homemade whipped cream sprinkled with cinnamon.

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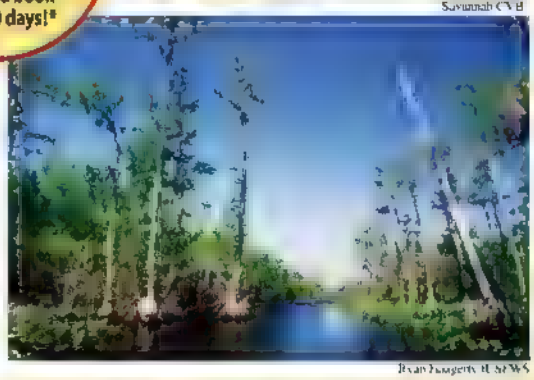

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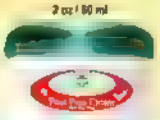

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Cristina Ferrare

The cookbook author, former top model and host of *Cristina Ferrare's Big Bowl of Love* on OWN talks culinary **secrets, sins and making meals count.**

INTERVIEW BY **MICHELE MEYER** | ILLUSTRATION BY **MICHAEL WITTE**

Flowers: instant gratification

1 **Which food most reminds you of your childhood?** Pappi's homemade tomato sauce with meatballs. Their moistness came from Italian bread soaked in milk.

2 **Any holiday entertaining advice?** Yes! Shop in advance to avoid packed parking, long lines and rude people—including me!

3 **Do you ever eat out of the carton?** No. If food isn't on a pretty plate, it's like drinking wine from a paper cup. I always use mats, fresh flowers and candles.

4 **The worst entertaining sin?** Serving hors d'oeuvres—which is French for appetite spoilers. Guests come hungry, pig out and then are too full for dinner.

5 **What's your signature dish?** Swordfish, lamb or chicken with tomato sauce, with basil and herbs from our garden.

6 **Who cooks at your house?** My daughter Alex and me. She's going to culinary school. We fight for kitchen space, but we bond.

7 **What's the last thing you cooked?** Artichokes the size of a head. I boiled them and arranged the petals like a flower's, with the heart at the center, then added vinaigrette with fresh mint, chives, basil and cucumber, plus a dash of Dijon mustard.

8 **Tell us about your kitchen counter.** I'm a gadget freak! A Capresso frother (**chefscatalog.com**, *$60*) makes thick foam for cappuccinos. My Williams-Sonoma citrus juicer (**williams-sonoma.com**, *$26*) helps me perk up dishes.

9 **Most memorable meal?** In Thailand, we took a really rickety boat to an island. I thought we'd die. Chickens ran loose there and fish lay in a trough. We ate lobster and coconut rice off a plastic table with toilet-paper napkins. It was the best. But not again.

10 **Your final food for thought?** Food is love. Serve it that way and your family and friends will feel it. A meal doesn't last long, but the connection it creates definitely does. So set the table, keep it positive and make those moments count. ■

Love makes everything better. Including supper.

Cristina Ferrare, author of *Big Bowl of Love*, is the mother of four, stepmother of three and grandmother of four. A top model in the '70s, she posed for the covers of *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines and in Max Factor ads.

MORE ONLINE
For two of Cristina's recipes—Super Duper Double Chocolate Chip Cookies and Osso Bucco—visit **tasteofhome.com/acrossthetable**.

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Recipe No. 7

C_ICKE_ BR_SCHE_TA _KILLET

IT'S NOT A GREAT RECIPE WITHOUT HUNT'S®

CHICKEN BRUSCHETTA SKILLET

INGREDIENTS

1 can (14.5 oz) Hunt's Diced Tomatoes, drained
3/4 cup shredded Italian blend cheese
1/4 cup chopped basil
5 small boneless chicken breasts
1 can (8oz) Hunt's Tomato Sauce
1 tsp minced garlic
2 cups garlic croutons, crushed slightly
Total time is 30 minutes, serves 5 people.

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine tomatoes, cheese and basil; set aside. Pound chicken to 1/2" thickness. Top with tomato mixture. Combine Hunt's Tomato Sauce and garlic in skillet; add chicken. Bring to a boil. Simmer covered for 15 minutes. Top with croutons and serve.

For a fresh look at recipes, check out the Hunt's Signature Recipe Collection at Hunts.com.

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